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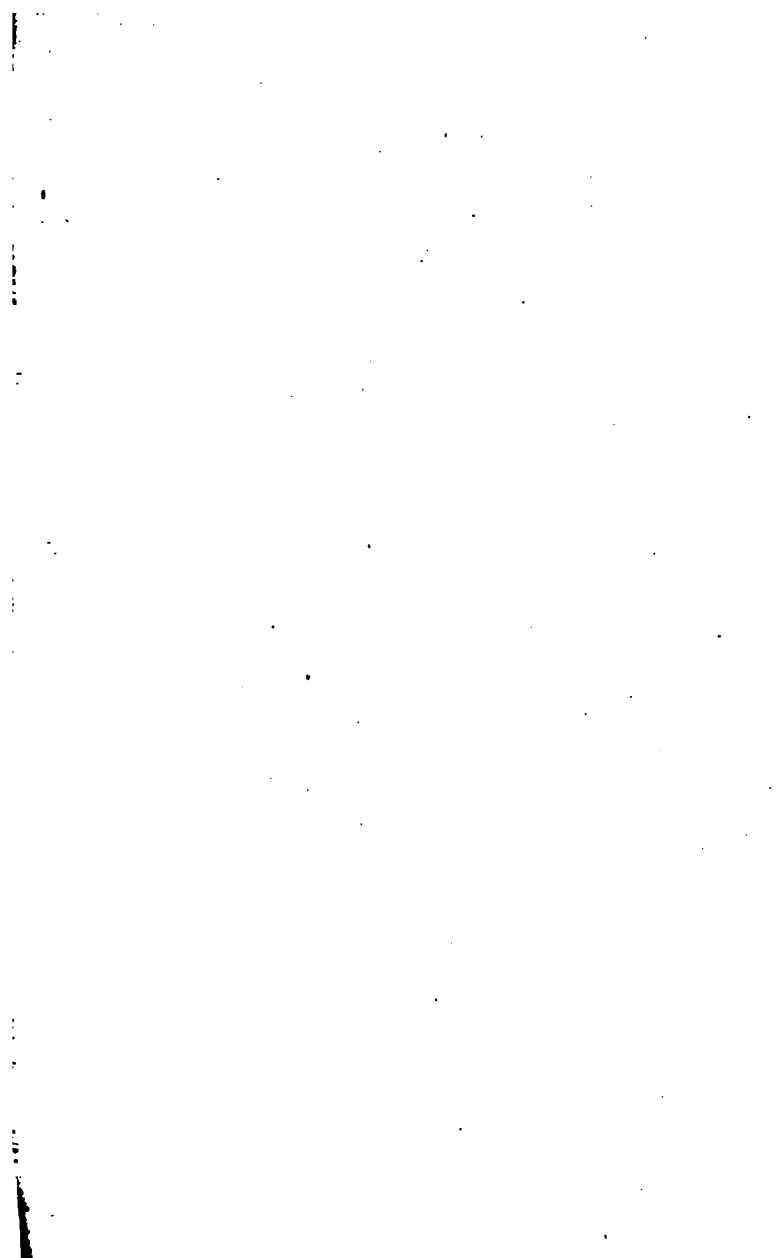
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ENDLESS PUNISHMENT:

SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENT FOR, AND REASONABLENESS OF
FUTURE ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.

BY

NEHEMIAH ADAMS, D. D.,

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OF "AT EVENTIDE," ETC.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

Boston.

REV. S. COBB, *Editor of the Christian Freeman.*

Dear Sir: I have received your printed note in your paper of the 25th ult., in which you say:

“And now I respectfully invite you, and proffer you the columns of the *Christian Freeman* for the work, to show the *Scripturalness* of future, endless punishment. This will afford you an opportunity to carry your strongest reasons into several thousands of Universalist families; and I earnestly hope that you will accept my proposition.”

The form in which you propose that I should do this, viz., by an exposition of isolated proof texts, each to be debated by you before I proceed to another, does not strike me favorably. I will comply with your invitation, if you will allow me to do it in my own way, — upon one condition, that there shall be no notes or comments on what I write in the number or numbers of your paper containing my communication.

Very respectfully yours,

N. ADAMS.

Representations have been made in some of the public prints respecting the nature and intention of the following article, which are wholly at variance with my design. I am

entering into no controversy, — this being the only article which I have at any time expected to prepare for the paper. Having been invited to preach in Hollis Street Church a sermon, prepared for my own congregation, on the Reasonableness of Endless Punishment, I was not at liberty, of course, to present any other view than that which the sermon contained, incomplete as all such presentations must be without a scriptural argument. While I was purposing to make, on some future occasion, a statement of the scriptural view, both of the nature and extent, of future retribution, an invitation to write on that subject in this paper unexpectedly occurred. I proceed, therefore, to fulfil my original purpose, and respectfully submit the following statement, with no thought of continuing the discussion.

N. A.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE invitation from the editor of this paper to make a statement of views which the "several thousands of families" who, it is said, will read this paper, repudiate, imposes a responsible, yet, for some reasons, a gratifying task. The names of not a few among my ministerial brethren occur to me, in whose able and more competent hands I would gladly place this labor, both for the gratification of the reader, and, as I view it, for the truth's sake. I feel encouraged in this work by the comparative regard which many in this denomination profess for the Bible. They do not assail it, as the manner of some is who differ from us; but their desire to make it speak in their favor secures for it an acknowledgment of its authority. As an illustration of this remark, I refer to a Review of Rev. T. S. King's "Two Discourses," by Rev. Dr. Thomas Whittemore, in the *Universalist Quarterly and General Review*, October, 1858. Dr. W. says: "It seems to us impossible to preserve the public reverence for the Bible, if we suffer ourselves to speak about it as Mr. King has done." "The four Gospels, according to Mr. K., are mere shreds and

tatters of what Christ taught. His manner of teaching was so peculiar, and so poetical and fanciful, that it is quite a wonder that we have even those tatters." "He (Mr. K.) speaks of God choosing to instruct the Church through a few fragmentary flashes of poetry. Good God! What an idea of revelation! What an idea of Jesus as a teacher! He has lost sight of 'the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'" (p. 377.)

Inasmuch as nothing but the clearest conviction that this doctrine of endless retribution is revealed in the Bible would allow us for a moment to believe and inculcate the fearful truth, which all who believe it receive with the most solemn awe, it awakens confidence and friendly feeling to think that the most of those who will read this article, thus regard the testimony of Scripture, explained by the ordinary rules of language, to be of binding authority.

I have also been led to think of this denomination as including many who are much exercised in their minds on the subject of future punishment. It is a welcome effort to show such individuals that some of their thoughts with regard to this subject and its advocates, are, perhaps, disproportioned and exaggerated. The most of those who believe in future, endless punishment, have far more peace of mind with regard to it than they appear to have who deny it; for with evangelical believers it sinks into its just proportion in the universal government of God, as the State's Prison, Courts of Law, Offices of Justice, blend, like the tonic element of iron in the blood, into the life of a commonwealth with its virtuous and happy homes, its hundreds of thousands of joyous children, its churches, its products, its whole prosperous tide of affairs. Though hell is not the central figure in the religious ideas of

evangelical Christians, the belief in future, endless retribution does exert its powerful influence upon us. We know that it is capable of vast abuse, as we see illustrated in the direful influence of its perversion by the Church of Rome. But we find it explicitly revealed, and "knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." If it were preached still more affectionately and plainly by us, conscious of our ill desert and of our obligations to redeeming love, there would be a nearer approach to the apostolic model. Our prevailing associations with this doctrine, we are happy to say, are those of deliverance, through the atoning death of the Son of God. It is in connection with his sacrifice for us that we always endeavor to preach it; so that we trust we may say concerning our system of faith, as it is said of heaven, "the Lamb is the light thereof." While we believe that the contemplation of future misery, apart from the cross of Christ, would be hurtful to the mind and heart, we also feel that it cannot be of healthful tendency with our moral natures to base our religious associations mainly on the one idea of opposition to endless punishment. An evil thing, real or imaginary, which we inordinately, or upon wrong principles, oppose, has a retroactive influence on our minds and hearts, corresponding to its own baleful nature.

It is with such views that I now write, — not, principally, with antagonists in my mind, though my statements will meet with antagonism, — so that if any are persuaded by counter statements that these views are unscriptural, they will do me the favor, at least, to think of me as their sincere well-wisher and friend, and as one who has the same eternal interests embarked in this question as themselves. Let us also keep in mind that mere argumentation never convinces men of

scriptural truths, but that there must be on our part an experience, wrought by the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer, to interpret things aright, which otherwise will be stumbling-blocks and foolishness. But, without further preface, I proceed to my argument.

SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENT
FOR
FUTURE, ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.



SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENT
FOR
FUTURE, ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.



I.

The Scriptures teach that there is a penalty for disobedience awaiting the finally impenitent.

THIS is plainly declared in Rom. ii. 5-12, 16: "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul

of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: but glory, honor, and peace to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law," "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." The parenthetic passages omitted here, which occur before the last of these sentences, are a direct assertion of the full accountableness of the heathen world to the tribunal of God, for their sins against their consciences and the light of nature. I take this whole passage of Scripture as a revelation of a future judgment and retribution, in which all men are to be judged and treated according to their works.

The ideas which are presented of heaven, both by Christ and his apostles, come to us through objects of sense. Every one supposes that by these images, as, for example, "sitting with Christ at his table in his kingdom," "new wine," "beholding his glory," and "gates of pearl,"

“streets of gold,” “harps” and “crowns,” it is intended to give us the idea of the highest pleasure of which our natures, body and soul, shall in another world be capable. We never subtract anything from these images of heavenly joy, saying, They are only metaphors; we rather say, Language here is intensified, to convey the ideas of future happiness. And as we believe that we shall have bodies in heaven “like unto” the Saviour’s “glorious body,” we are never unwilling to think that there will be enjoyments adapted to the body with the soul — spiritual, of course, in both cases, and yet beautifully distinguished, but capable of blending, as in this world. This way of representing unseen things to us is not so much “Oriental” as the only possible way, at present, of communicating spiritual objects to our understanding.

But while the attractions of heaven suffer nothing by reason of criticisms upon the language in which they are presented, some do not use the same tolerance, nor apply the same principles of interpretation, when they read or speak of future punishment. Here, they say, all is metaphorical, Oriental; they select certain im-

ages, and ask if any suppose that the wicked are, literally, to suffer such things, from just these elements of pain. But the representations of heaven are certainly obnoxious to the very same criticisms, and similar questions may be asked concerning them. But being of a pleasurable nature, they escape criticism. Therefore, if we are inquired of in either case, Do you believe that these things are literally so? the proper answer seems to be in both cases, Either these things, or things which now can only be expressed by them. Those earthly symbols approach nearer than anything with which we are now acquainted, to the things signified.

The condition of the wicked after death is represented through such symbols by Christ and his apostles as a state of positive punishment. With a desire to speak cautiously on such a point, and to follow only the most obvious leadings of Scripture, very many are constrained to believe that while the finally impenitent will experience the consequences naturally flowing from their moral condition, those consequences of their sins will be kept alive by the power of God, and that continual sin will receive con-

tinually new punishment. In the sermon on the reasonableness of endless punishment (see the preface), I assumed, for the sake of the argument, that future misery should consist only in the natural consequences of evil, and then argued that it was reasonable that these should be endless. I also deprecated any inquiry beyond the plain language of the New Testament as to the elements of punishment. The subject forbade any extended consideration of the nature of future punishment, nor did I undertake to state my own belief on that point. In attempting now to show that the Scriptures represent the future condition of the wicked to be a state of punishment, it will be submitted to the reader whether infliction from the hand of God be not necessarily involved from the language of the Bible.

One of those indirect proofs of a thing which sometimes are more forcible and convincing than direct statements, occurs in the words of Christ, which I will refer to as proving the future punishment of the wicked, in which he tells us to "*fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*"*

* Matt. x. 28.

If God has merely the natural ability to do this, while his character makes it morally impossible that he should ever do it, the illustration is singularly at fault. It would never be proper to tell a child, as a reason why it should fear its father and mother, that they have power to inflict a punishment which we know is morally impossible. Their mere natural ability to inflict it would not justify the exhortation, "Yea, I say unto you, fear them." To associate the idea of destroying both body and soul in hell with our proper fear of God, our heavenly Father, if he would do no such thing, would not be in accordance with truth.

Some, to avoid this difficulty, say that the passage means merely that God can destroy life. But so can they who kill the body. There is something more which God alone can do, and which we need rather to fear. Others, knowing that the original word for *hell* in this passage cannot mean *the grave*, propose to render the warning thus: that God can cast those whom he kills into the valley of Hinnom. But so could assassins or judicial executioners. We still look for that which God alone can do. Some say it

must be annihilation. But the valley of Hinnom is notoriously symbolical of perpetuity — the fire always burning, the worm ever breeding. Why, moreover, should any *place* be specified in which the annihilation, which is the same thing everywhere, should occur? Or what appropriateness is there in speaking of the soul as being annihilated there? Destroying both soul and body in hell seems to be equivalent to that expression, “everlasting destruction,” — an apparent contradiction of terms, but conveying the idea of perpetual loss and misery.

We get no relief from these difficulties with the passage if we turn to the milder form in which the idea is expressed in Luke xii. 5: “Fear Him which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him;” for Gehenna, understood literally as the valley of Hinnom, presents to the mind the most terrific image of positive misery. Nothing can be more revolting or fearful. Let those who are jealous at imputations cast upon the character of God by the doctrine of endless punishment, explain how Jesus could even suggest the idea of the Father casting his offspring into a

place, the name of which was borrowed from the most fearful object then known to his hearers. Until this passage is shown to imply no punishment from the hand of God, we must regard it as an impregnable proof of future visitations of misery upon the wicked.

Some who believe in future punishment seek to mitigate the influence of the dread truth upon their feelings by the theory that future punishment will consist only in the natural effects of sin. This relieves them of the necessity to think that God will inflict anything directly upon the wicked.

One thing seems incontrovertible, viz.: the Bible does not teach us that sin is its own complete punishment. It is true that without the elements of misery in themselves, the Bible tells us, sinners could not be made miserable; nor would outward inflictions constitute punishment, unless there were something within for the fire to kindle. But it admits of a question whether, if the sinner should be left entirely to himself, undisturbed by any external power, adding new energy to sorrow, or opening new sources of it, he could not in time adjust himself, as in this

world, to any circumstances. Even in this world, trouble, or the infliction of pain and sorrow, is necessary to rouse the conscience. To some extent God punishes men in this world, for this purpose. "Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God." "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel." The seventy-third Psalm describes the wicked who "are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." Hence "their strength is firm." But even tribulation is powerless in many cases, and the sinner is either emboldened by temporary respite, or provoked by the rod to further opposition. Pharaoh is an eminent example of this. It is said of another, "And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord; this is that king Ahaz." Other passages in accordance with these, to prove the positions just laid down, might easily be cited.

So that, however terrible and bitter the condition of the sinner might be at first, it is not inconceivable that he should at last say, with Satan in *Paradise Lost*, "Hail! horrors, hail!

and thou, profoundest hell!" if God would but depart from him! Sinking into a torpid, brutish state, or rousing themselves into defiant forms of hatred and blasphemy, occupying themselves with plots and counterplots in their strife with each other, the wicked in hell, like bad or abandoned people here, might make their condition tolerable. They would, for example, feel the need of subordination among themselves for their own protection; selfishness would suggest many alleviations of misery by mutual forbearance; and as the worst of men—pirates, gamblers, debauchees—have codes of honor, and ambition its fawning flatteries, and pride smothers its resentment, and selfishness in all its forms is compelled to put on the mask of submission and obeisance, so the wicked, if left to themselves, even with their wickedness festering and their crimes becoming gigantic, might manage, by self-control, to reduce things into a system which to their wretched natures might, in very many cases, be even tolerable. Sin itself is no misery to a sinner; it must meet with ill success, it must be compelled to feel a superior power acting contrary to itself; then,

indeed, it is the occasion of misery. It is no sorrow to wicked men here, for God to depart from them ; it is rather their desire ; “ therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” Saul never would have uttered that bitter cry, “ God is departed from me, and is become my enemy,” if the Philistines had not pursued hard after him. God and he had been for a long time far apart ; but very little did Saul care for this, until the day of his calamity made haste.

If, therefore, there is to be, in the strict sense of the term, punishment after death, it would seem that there must, in the nature of things, be visitations upon the wicked of that which the Bible calls “ indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.” While there must be in the sinner himself a state of things which will make these inflictions punishment, there must also be a mighty hand stretched out forever to make the future condition of the wicked, one of retribution. There is both error and truth in the common saying with many that future misery will proceed from conscience ;—error, if it be supposed that conscience left to itself will occasion

torment; for, if in this world, with so much to stimulate conscience, it so easily falls asleep, the provocations, and the necessity of self-defence, and redress, and all the bad influences of hell, must have the power totally to sear it;—but there is truth in the saying, if it be allowed that God is to visit the wicked in ways that will excite conscience against them; this would be “infliction,” compared with which fire and brimstone, though the most appalling images of torture we can easily conceive, do not convey more terrible ideas of retribution.

Now, the Bible is continually representing the wicked as receiving from God positive inflictions, and not merely as being abandoned to themselves. Even when it speaks of many sources of misery which might seem to be the natural consequences of their sin, it often represents these consequences as being administered by the direct agency of the Almighty. So that the two things seem to be combined. “Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup.” “Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be

none to deliver." "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready." These passages teach that sinners will not merely be left to the natural consequences of sin. The ideas of arrest, and of execution, are here presented; the transgressor is not left to himself, with merely his sin for his punishment. Then, again, we read: "Woe unto the wicked; it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him." "Yea, woe unto them also when I. depart from them." Even though the wicked should not suffer otherwise, nor to a greater degree, than they are capable of suffering in their minds here, yet, if they are to be punished, these sufferings must be kept active by an outward power; for their natural tendency is to harden and stupefy, or to excite passions whose gratification affords a certain redress.

All this we may believe without venturing one step into the dominion of fancy to depict the kind and manner of those inflictions which are necessary to constitute punishment. Nor is it necessary; for knowing as we do by experi-

ence and observation what the passions of the human heart are when restraint is weakened or removed, we need no external images of woe to represent what it must be for God to minister excitement to them by his presence and his intercourse with them. In a sense he departs from them, as he did from Saul. By this is signified the withdrawal of everything merciful, alleviating, hopeful, and of a restraining reformatory nature. Yet he will always make his presence to be felt; for "if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there." While, therefore, material images of woe, if too specific, seem to degrade the subject, and are apt to pass over, in their effect on some, from the extreme of horror to the grotesque, they are not objectionable on the score of over-statement; nothing which fancy ever depicted being capable of expressing the misery which must be felt by a depraved soul opposed to God and with God for its punisher. We have only to think of what is sometimes felt at funerals and closing graves, to see what future misery must be in one of its merely incidental forms—the loss of all good forever. If God shall but keep perpetually fresh such

sorrows as men feel here, he will fulfil a large part of that which the Saviour and the apostles have declared to be the future portion of the wicked. So that when good men like Leighton, Baxter, Andrew Fuller, the Wesleys, Watts, and Edwards, portray, according to their several conceptions, the pains of the wicked, they fall far below the truth; and their representations, if at all objectionable, are not so for the reason that they surpass the dread reality; for that is impossible. Let us now consider the following passages:—

“As therefore the tares are gathered and are burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” These same closing words are used a few verses afterwards, in explaining the parable of the net. Not to burden the attention of the reader, there is one passage more which I will quote in connection with the preceding, for the sake of briefly remarking upon them, before passing to the next topic.

The passage to which I refer is: "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest, day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."*

If the Bible says that angels, at the last day, inflict on the wicked that which can best be compared only to casting them into a furnace of fire, I will implicitly believe it. My reason ascertains whether this is said, beyond reasonable doubt; then reason bows to revelation. I will not object that such employment does not consist with my conceptions of angelic natures. If I did, the question would be appropriate, Do you consent that a holy angel should have cut off the hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians of

* Rev. xiv. 9-11.

Sennacherib's army in one night, and that another should have directed the pestilence of three days in Israel? What will you do about these things? You are disposed, perhaps, to associate angels with "birds and flowers," with elves and fairies, and not with garments rolled in blood, or hands reeking with slaughter. My reply is, I will correct my natural or acquired feelings by the word of God. But the word of God says that angels will cast "all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, into a furnace of fire." Inanimate things are not meant; for it is added, "there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Moreover, the word of God says that the idolatrous worshippers of the beast shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.

My only question will be again, Does the Bible mean by this that men will be made to suffer in a way which is most appropriately expressed by fire and brimstone; that even if it be not literally so, there would really be nothing to choose between the two things, the figure and the literal meaning? And does it say that holy angels, and the Lamb of God himself, will look on, approve,

and confirm the infliction? If so, I fully and firmly believe it; be it figurative or literal, I believe it, and I will take it to be the same as literal. And I will postpone the explanation to my natural feelings, till I know more. I find that when men fully understand the enormities of some outrage upon a fellow-creature, and the soul is filled with them, the punishment, swift or slow, meets with no repugnance in their nature. Perhaps when I know more about sin and unbelief, it will be so with regard to future punishment. Only let me be persuaded that the language of the Bible, properly interpreted, declares anything; then there is no appeal.

But I now respectfully ask the attention of the reader, when I say, that if I did not believe in there being a state of future punishment which justifies such language, I fear that I could not stop short of the boldest infidelity. I might even assail the Bible as unfit to be read. It is no relief to tell me that the language does not mean all which it would seem to convey. I should reply, This is bad language, unless there be something which language of this sort only can express. But if it be an exaggeration of a

truth, or if, for the sake of impression, an idea is conveyed which is false, a man may as well apologize to me for a profane blasphemer, saying that his oaths do not really mean all which they express, as try to reconcile me to the belief that such words as these are inspired. It is not the *truth* which offends me, but the *untruthfulness* of the language. The words are not decorous; my moral sense is abused, when I read such expressions, unless substantial truth requires them. The sin is not against my faith, but against my understanding. If there be nothing in holy angels, and in the Saviour, which corresponds to these representations, I should be tempted to go at once from the Bible to the teaching and preaching of some man who rejects the Bible, and rejects it partly because it uses such language. But where should I find such a preacher, who would not trouble me with the inconsistency of taking his text every Sabbath from the very book from which I seek to flee? So true is it that the stoutest unbeliever cannot shake off the hold which the Bible has upon his moral nature. Absolute scepticism seems to be as impossible as universal knowledge.

“Cast them into a furnace of fire,” “in the presence of the holy angels,” “and of the Lamb.” Some tell me that this is “Oriental;” some, that it is merely “flame-picture;” some, that it is “mere hyperbole.” Now, if a mere show of displeasure is signified by this language, the objection is, not to the punishment, but, that such inappropriate, such defamatory representations should be used in connection with the holy angels and the Lamb of God. If you will insist that the words are true, I have no objection to make. But the Bible does not observe the ordinary laws of decorum in language, unless truth would be violated by the use of other and milder terms than these, in describing the future infliction of punishment upon the wicked.

The following scriptures, teaching that the wicked are in misery after death, confirm the foregoing statements: “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness.” “The ungodly are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.” “The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before God exceedingly.” “And the Lord rained fire and brimstone out of heaven, and destroyed them all.” “The rich man died, and was buried ;

and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." "Judas by transgression fell, and went to his own place." "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." "And where I am, thither ye cannot come."

He who will say that such men as are here described meet in death with a change of character which prepares them at once for happiness, may as well assert, once for all, that delusion is practised upon us by the representations of the Bible; that the object is merely to frighten the living; that apparent judgments upon the wicked, death and its terrors, are merely a dumb show, a tragic demonstration, a dissolving view turning, within the veil, into manifestations of compassion and love. There have not been wanting men, who, in their concern for the character of God, have interpreted his words of vengeance, and his terrible acts towards the wicked, in this manner—as though such deception were any relief from imputations of undue severity. Archbishop Tillotson ventured such an explanation, and President Edwards's ironical reproof of him and others, for betraying their Maker's secret, is well known. There are

some even now who, like the sect of Manichees, seem to hold that all evil resides in matter, and therefore that in the separation of the soul from the body the soul becomes pure. But the question before us is, What do the Scriptures teach? If there be anything conclusive in positive statements, this is placed beyond all reasonable dispute — that some men die in their sins, and that after death they have in themselves the elements of misery. The rich man surely is an instance of this. Judas's "own place" was not heaven.

We have seen thus far that, while the Scriptures represent the wicked themselves to be an essential source of their own misery, future punishment necessarily implies infliction, or excitation, from a source beyond the sinner himself. Some opprobriously call this "the doctrine of endless torture." But there is something more terrible here than "torture." If the sinner were made to feel constantly that he is in the hands of a torturer, many a passion of his nature might minister strength to his resistance, and impart fortitude. But to have his own self excited against him forever, so as to seem the prox-

imate cause of his misery, is the more helpless woe. But however the sources of it may be combined, we have seen that the wicked are in misery after death. The question now is, Will their misery remain forever? Do the Scriptures teach that the punishment of the wicked, made up as it necessarily is from the natural consequences of evil-doing and positive inflictions from the hand of God, will be without end? The affirmative of this question I have undertaken to prove.

But it may be said, You undertake an impossible task, because you know nothing of futurity. Principles may yet be evolved which now are slumbering in the bosom of God. You must journey farther than man has gone before you can decide this subject. "Have the gates of death been opened to thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?"


The only question to be considered is, What do the Scriptures now teach as to the future condition of the wicked? Do they, or do they not, represent it as unalterable? If we can ascertain this we need not perplex ourselves as to ulterior revelations; nor should we refuse to

receive the present testimony of God, with the objection that something more may possibly be said hereafter. What, then, does the Bible teach us as to the state and prospects of the impenitent after death?

Let the reader now endeavor to lay out of the question all considerations relating to the reasonableness or justice of future, endless punishment. Let him not foreclose the discussion in his own mind by saying that it is unreasonable and unjust, and therefore that it cannot be in the Bible. Rather let him first ascertain whether it be taught there, and then, if he will, let him debate with himself whether finding it there, he will, or will not, receive the Bible itself.

In considering whether the Scriptures teach that the punishment of the wicked will be without end, we will see if the following proposition can be maintained.

*



II.

Redemption by Christ is represented as having for its object salvation from final perdition.

IF upon the failure of all which is done in redemption to save men, they are to be subjected to another probation after death, there are powerful reasons to think that the surest way to effect their recovery is, to let them know beforehand that God will give them a second trial.

For this is manifestly the way in which God proceeded with the Hebrew people, whose reformation in this world, and whose allegiance, he was seeking to secure. In foresight of their apostasy and punishment, they were told beforehand that they should have a second probation. The following words are an explicit declaration to this effect, and are an instance of divine wisdom which man would never have devised, from fear of consequences. After telling Israel of the happy fruit which would attend their obedience, and the direful effects of their apostasy,

instead of leaving them in doubt whether they will have a second probation, God expressly tells them that they shall be again restored. "When thou art in tribulation and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice, (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God,) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he swore unto thee." *

It might have been argued with much plausibleness that such an announcement would be inexpedient; that it would have a direct effect to make men careless and presumptuous. But infinite wisdom judged otherwise, and proceeded at different times to say: "If his children forsake my law, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod;—nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him." And again: "If my covenant be not with day and night, then will I cast off the seed of Jacob;—for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy upon them." Again: "I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not forever."

* Deut. iv. 30.

What principle in moral natures is there which makes this announcement, to sinners, of future clemency and restoration, wise and expedient? The obvious answer is, Hope. Whether or not there can ever be repentance without hope, it is certain that hope is a powerful means of repentance. "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned." — The promise of a future trial, the explicit avowal of relenting in his displeasure, with a view to the final recovery of the transgressors, was deemed by the Most High to be essential in the exercise of his administration in ancient times. The admixture of hope in his threatenings, the line of light in the horizon below the coming tempest, was regarded by Jehovah as a necessary means of effecting the ultimate restoration of the Jews, so that, to this day, provision is made for hope to fasten its hand upon exceeding great and precious promises, the moment that the thought arises of turning to God. He would have the sinners think, in their deep distress under the chastising rod, that he would be

found of them, if they returned and sought him, and that he made provision for hope even while the terrible blow was about to descend.

In offering pardon and salvation to men through the sufferings and death of Christ, and in setting forth the consequences of neglecting so great salvation, if God does not intimate that, nevertheless, the wicked shall not be utterly cast off, surely it is not because it would be inconsistent with the principles of moral government thus to mingle hope with chastisement. We have seen that intimations of future mercy were made to men who were abusing the most signal acts of divine favor; and that to secure their future repentance, God judged it wise and prudent to prevent the ill effect which wrath and punishment might have upon them, by so ordering it that they should recollect amidst their punishment that even long before the moment of descending wrath, he remembered mercy, and that, accordingly, when about to cast them off, he said, "How shall I give thee up? — my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." And the anointed prophet said in his name, "He will return, he will have mercy

upon us ; and thou wilt cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea." All this, it will be remembered, was not a sudden relenting ; it was part of a plan announced so long beforehand as to give evidence of special design.

We, therefore, say, that if no such foretokens of far distant mercy and forgiveness are now made to those who reject Christ, it cannot properly be argued that it would be unsuitable, and that wisdom and prudence forbid. On the contrary, such promises would be in accordance with those former dealings of God with men in which he has manifested the most peculiar love for transgressors. It would be analogous to his former conduct should he intimate, in immediate connection with his threatenings, that if we neglect our present opportunity and means of salvation, and subject ourselves necessarily to a long and fearful discipline of sorrow, nevertheless the time will come when he will return and be pacified towards us for all which we have done. If no such intimations are given, we have strong presumptive evidence that it is because the condition of the wicked at death is final.

For, as we read the threatenings against Edom,

and Babylon, and Egypt, and Tyre, we find no words of promise mingled with the predictions of their doom. Probation for them is past; hence, when God is declaring his vengeance against them, not one word is uttered which, in the hour of their downfall, would come to their memories as a ray of hope. The utter ruin and desolation of those kingdoms show the reason for withholding every promise of future mercy; it was intended that their destruction should be final.

But it may be said, Is God under any obligation to disclose all his future purposes with regard to the wicked? Surely not; but certainly he will not deceive us; he is not obliged to tell us anything; but if he tells us a part, he will not make false impressions.


But some will say, It may now be wise in God to vary his plan, and suffer the wicked to "depart" with the full expectation that their doom is forever; and then he may interpose and save them. Who will deny that this is possible?

It is evidently the object of the gospel to save men here from their sins, and to rescue them from future misery, limited or endless. Is it

honest, or would it not be like "false pretences," to make the impression that there is to be no further probation after death, if the idea is utterly inconsistent with the character of God? We know what is thought of one who offers his wares as positively the last, and then produces more. The question is simply this: Would God seek to save men by making them think that this is their only chance of pardon, when he knows that it is not to be the last? But if God intended that we should believe this to be the last, who among the sons of the mighty is entitled to the merit of having undeceived us? It is impiety to assert that there is a future probation, against the plain declarations of the Bible, if such declarations are made.

Now let us examine the inspired record. At the very close of the Bible we read: "He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous let him be righteous still, and he that is holy let him be holy still." As the "unjust" and "filthy" never could be directed to refrain, in this world, from efforts to become good, (unless their day of grace were past,) these words are obviously a

declaration that character is unchangeable after death. In faithful consistency even to the last with the great distinguishing feature of the Christian religion, viz., regard for the individual, the closing words of the Bible have reference to each accountable member of the human family: "And behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." Here is the place where we should look for intimations, if any could be made, of future probation. Here is the promontory which runs down to the unfathomable main, looks forth on "that ocean we must sail so soon;" and as it terminates all earthly efforts after salvation, does it give us one hint about some future method of recovery? Are there signals prepared on this cape and headland, indicating to the eye of despair, afar off, that the cross of Christ holds out proposals of reconciliation still, to those who trampled it under foot, on their way to eternity? On the contrary, everything makes the impression on the vast majority of readers ever since these words were written, that the results of life are to be final. No hopeful class of probationers are represented as "with-



out," when the righteous have entered through the gates into the city. All the sublime images in the last chapters of this book come thronging down to that shore where inspiration lays aside its pen and looks towards the shoreless waste beyond time. It has been said that the Old Testament ends with a curse. This is a mistake. It ends with a promise of turning the hearts of fathers and children, to avert a curse. But no prediction of any turning of hearts in eternity occurs at the close of that book which gives us the last information respecting the future. Its silence is as impressive as its few decisive words.

We can imagine how Christ would have drawn the picture of retribution had he followed the Old Testament, in doing so, in its hopeful and prophetic intermingling of light with the darkness. Making the prospect terrific, at first, beyond all human power of description, to enforce the duty of immediate repentance, and to deter from sin, then appealing to our sense of propriety, our magnanimity, our shame, he would have told us how in the future, more or less remote, God would visit his erring and perverse children with his remonstrances; how he himself would

weep over them and repeat the offers of pardon ; and in view of all this we can imagine how he would expostulate. Such a procedure would accord with the principles of human nature and of the divine government, as illustrated in the history of Israel. Is the Saviour less compassionate and ready to forgive than the God of the Old Testament? — for we see God listening to catch the first sigh of repentance ; and when he hears it, he proclaims : “ I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus : Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke ; turn thou me and I shall be turned ; for thou art the Lord my God.” Not one word like this do we hear from the lips of him who was the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of his person. Where is prophecy, with her glowing tongue, foretelling, at the hour of captivity, the sinner’s final return ? The opening of hell, and the final release of Satan and his angels, and of wicked men, would have been an anticipation sublime beyond most other visions ; and, if allowable, it could not have failed to excite the imagination of seers and prophets. But where are the

Isaiahs, stretching their vision beyond time and the captivity of hell, saying, Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to the cursed, and say unto them that their warfare is accomplished, that their iniquity is pardoned; for they have received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins. Can it be that not even from you, beloved John, is there a vision or a word of hope for sinners after death? You saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, the books opened, and another book, which is the book of life. You saw the judgment, and the doom; the lake of fire was first prepared by casting death and hell into it, and when all was ready, whosoever was not found written in the book of life, you saw him cast into the lake of fire. No syllable of mercy? No visit from the angel that talked with thee, saying, Come up hither, to see, from a higher point, beyond that lake? Have you no yearning look? — not even one slightly musical dark saying upon the harp, to keep us from suspecting that God can ever be implacable? In the Old Testament he relents and repents. "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." "How shall I make thee as

Admah ! How shall I set thee as Zeboim ! My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Is that Old Testament, which is represented by scoffers as "cruel," "sanguinary," "vindictive," actually more merciful in its expressions towards rebellious Israel than the New Testament is towards men who died in their sins ?

How strange that He, who wept over Jerusalem, could say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," and let fall no expressions of commiseration or word of hope, nor leave some elliptical "notwithstanding," — an unfinished sentence, a place with asterisks, a chance even for a guess that all would not be forever determined for the wicked, at the last day !

Mark the altered language, the different tone and manner of the Saviour towards the wicked in the other world, compared with his words and behavior towards our sinful race when he was on earth. "The master of the house has risen up, and shut to the door." They knock ; he says, "I tell you I know you not, whence ye are. Depart from me." The direction is, "Bind him,

hand and foot." They "cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion," not with candidates for heaven, under discipline, but "with the hypocrites." He is "thrust out." Christ uses the expressions, "lose his soul;" "be cast away;" "salted with fire;" "grind him to powder;" "son of perdition;" "slay them before me;" "seek me and not find me;" "gather the good, and cast the bad away;" "great gulf fixed;" "die in your sins;" "where I am ye cannot come." In various parts of the Bible we meet with phrases of the like tenor, — such as "wrath to come;" "shame and everlasting contempt;" "torment us before the time;" "reap corruption;" "wages of sin is death;" "more tolerable for Sodom in the day of judgment;" "mist of darkness forever and ever." Indeed, these incidental expressions, interwoven everywhere throughout the Bible, assume that the doctrine of future, endless punishment for sin is a matter of course. The common mode of referring to the future implies it. "Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke;" "then a great ransom will not deliver thee." "I will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when

your fear cometh." The numerous passages of this tenor do not suggest any idea of future clemency.

Paul thus declares the end of the wicked :

- "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that knew not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe, for our testimony among you was believed in that day." That this does not apply to the destruction of Jerusalem, as the Papists and some Protestants would have us think, appears from the next chapter, in which the Thessalonians are told that "that day" is not "at hand," because the "man of sin" was first to be revealed.

Then Peter follows him, and says, "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Thus, while the Bible satisfies us that the redemption made by Christ is a final effort to save men, we do not wonder that those who reject the Godhead of Christ and his sacrifice for sin, reject also the idea of endless punishment. There is no adequate necessity for a divine Saviour with his vicarious sacrifice, if there be no such penalty annexed to the law of God. Every man is then his own redeemer, either by obedience or by suffering.

But the evangelical believer looks into the manger and upon the cross, and sees there his God incarnate. He sees, in that Christ, a sacrifice for his sins. The world laugh him to scorn. They demand whether he believes that his God is dying; and every form of intellectual ridicule is poured upon him. He steadfastly maintains that "the Word was God," that "the Word was made flesh," that this incarnate Word was on the cross, "a ransom for many," "a propitiation through faith in his blood," his sufferings a substitute for the sinner's punishment. The believer looks to find some necessity for such an incarnation, and for the sacrificial death of such a being. He cannot find it in the need of

example, moral suasion, or representation of the divine interest in him ; but, in the declaration that Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, he sees the appropriateness of the incarnation to give a divine worth and efficacy to sufferings which are to atone for sin. There is no revelation to be compared with this: "God was manifest in the flesh," and, he "was manifested to take away our sins." By all the methods of imagery, symbolism, predictions, and most minute, pathetic delineations of his coming, his life, death, and resurrection ; by appeals from his own lips, and those of men "in Christ's stead ;" by that perpetual memorial of him, and of his sacrifice, the Lord's supper, men are admonished, and, "as though God did beseech them," urged to accept pardon through this infinite provision made for the forgiveness of sin. This produces the effect, generally, upon the mind, of a last effort.

It might have been supposed that the work of Christ would suffice for the present dispensation, and that men rejecting or neglecting it would, in a future state, be approached by those influences which belong peculiarly to the work of the third

person in the Godhead. But Christ said, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." Something more than ordinary divine influence is meant here by the Comforter; for the Saviour's being in the world would not of course keep *divine influence* out of it, or prevent the disciples from receiving comfort in God. A special, divine agency is here recognized, and, by all the laws of language, a special, divine, personal agent. His object is to reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. All which is implied in the idea of moral omnipotence is thus made to bear upon the hearts and minds of men, to effect their reconciliation to God, through Christ.

Resistance to these efforts in a certain way, it is declared, shall have the effect, however long a time before death it may be made, to consign the sinner to hopeless condemnation; for "whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

It does not seem easy to explain how any one who "hath never forgiveness," "neither in this world, neither in the world to come," is to be saved; nor by what moral distinctions it can be made to appear that some who commit one particular sin are justly condemned to a hopeless, unforgiven state, and that all the rest of mankind are to be restored. The work of the Holy Spirit, and the unpardonable sin against him, convince us that the effort of mercy to save men ends with life. Such words as these from Christ, "hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation," admit of no appeal.


In this connection let it be observed that evangelical Christians regard the work of the Holy Spirit as of equal importance with the death of Christ, and as essential a part of the work of redemption. It is from sin that we are to be redeemed; it is to holiness that we are to be restored; hell and heaven are a consummation, respectively, of sin and holiness. But we notice that those who reject the idea of future punishment dwell much on sin and holiness as being the sole objects of redemption, irrespective of the future state to which they

lead. Olshausen says: "The Scriptures know no such pretended divestment of all egoism, that man needs as motives neither fear nor hope, whether of damnation or eternal happiness;—and rightly; for it (*i. e.* this notion) exhibits itself either as fanatical error, as in Madame Guyon, or, which is doubtless most common, as indifference and torpidity."* However some may regard it as a narrow and selfish thing to make so much, as evangelical Christians do, of "salvation" and "safety," we find that the New Testament sets us the example. Its chief burden is holiness, likeness to God; but it appeals to our love of happiness and dread of pain; sentimental philosophy would substitute for these instincts a perception of the "good, the beautiful, and the true;" the gospel insists on these, but the way to reach them is through the natural constitution which God has given us. Inspiration does not disdain to say, "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not

* Commentary, v. 302.

shall be damned." "We shall be saved from wrath through him." "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us." "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The attempt to show that all this is unworthy of our "noble aspirations," is only professing to be wise; but "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." The work of the Holy Spirit in applying the redemption by Christ to the souls of men has for its object not only to save them from sin, but from its "wages," which is "death."

All having failed, and men going from under the concentrated influences of redeeming mercy into a future state, if then the God who has provided such a plan of redemption, is to meet them, and, rather than have them perish, abandon all his terms, and admit them to heaven upon their own conditions, rather than see them suffer; if he who became flesh and died for them, will then consent that punishment shall try to effect that which love and earthly discipline, together, failed to accomplish, and punishment proves to




be the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation, and sinners will therefore have more powerful means of grace in hell than under the gospel, we, for our part, need another revelation to inform us of it, and then to explain its consistency with our present Bible.

III.

The fall of angels, and of man, is a confirmatory proof of future, endless retribution.

THIS will of course have weight only with those who believe in the existence and fall of angels, and in the fall of man. To prove either of these here, would be out of place; and, indeed, the necessity of proving them would show that everything which has thus far been said in this article is superfluous, because it takes for granted many things generally believed, which rest, however, on the same kind of evidence with the existence of angels and their fall. The apostles, the scribes and Pharisees, I have not thought it necessary to prove had a real existence, and that they were not merely personified principles of good and evil. If the reader be one who rejects the doctrine of fallen angels, and of the fall of man, he will



read what is here said merely as showing the way in which those who believe these things are confirmed, by them, in their belief of endless retribution. Peter says, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." * Jude says, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." †

If God did not keep angels from falling, we are not constrained to think that he will restore them. If he will hereafter reinstate them by a direct act of power, the same power could have kept them from falling, with no greater interference with their free agency. If he allowed them to fall with a view to some great good in their natures, suffering them, in the progress of their experience, to ruin this world, and bring in such a fearful plague as sin has been to our race, all to be compensated for in the great sweep of ages by this beneficial knowledge of evil, we are

* 2 Peter ii. 4.

† Jude, 6.

led to the conclusion that sin and suffering are the necessary means of the greatest good. But what manner of Supreme Being have we here for a Universalist to love and worship? His government, it would seem, cannot proceed without suffering a host of angels, falling from their thrones in heaven, to pass through centuries of sin and mischief. This seems neither benevolent nor wise.

In the exercise of their liberty we are told that angels kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, and that God hath reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. If they are finally to be restored, God will restore them, or they will come back of themselves. If God foresaw that he must finally restore them, he would have kept them from falling, unless sin and misery are, under his government, the means of the greatest good. If so, this may be one of the cases in which if a little is good, more is better; and perhaps the best interests of the universe will be promoted by protracting this sin and suffering indefinitely.

It is a wholly gratuitous assumption that fallen angels and men will at last, of their own accord, repent. Who has travelled so far as to know this? What reason have we to think that hell will finally convince and persuade men? All our present knowledge respecting it contradicts this expectation. Satan and his angels have tried its redeeming power, if it has any, for at least six thousand years. We see no premises, therefore, on which to base the assertion that men will at last universally repent. It does not appear that being in torment, even, will have any better effect, forever, on men, than it seems to have had on "the rich man," whose only prayer to Abraham was for mitigation of pain, and for a warning to be sent to his brethren. He seems to think that if one went to them from the dead, they would repent. Why had he not repented himself, among the dead? Surely the very experience of hell itself must be a more powerful means of good than a mere apparition. But as suffering had not made him penitent, it must be that it has no such effect after death. Hell seems a very cruel

means of effecting the reformation of sinners, when we think that, if employed for this purpose through such great periods of punishment, it will be employed by Him who so easily converted Saul of Tarsus, and the woman that was a sinner, and Zaccheus, and the thief on the cross. This is, to my own mind, one of the insuperable objections to the theory of future disciplinary punishment. I can readily yield my assent to the declaration that "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life;" it does no violence to my understanding that those who refuse salvation by Christ, when notified that their refusal will be fatal, should reap forever that which they sowed, and continue hereafter to sow that which they reap, and thus without end. I read this in the Bible. I have no controversy with it. But that a human soul should need ages in hell, with Satan and his angels, to be made contrite, is as contrary to all analogy as it is destitute of scriptural proof. Besides, if God does all in this world which he can do without destroying free agency, to convert certain men, it is difficult to see how the use of superior

power in hell can fail to destroy it utterly. If God does not use all proper means here to save men, how is he infinitely merciful? But if here he goes to the very boundaries of their free agency, which, it is said, he never passes over, and yet fails to subdue them, it is gratuitous to say that he will certainly succeed any better hereafter.

How much longer than these six thousand years past, angels are to suffer, we cannot tell; but the consignment of wicked men at the last day to such company as that of "the devil and his angels," looks fearfully unlike a remedial measure for angel or man.

The last sentence is utterly inconsistent with any expectation, or intention, on the part of Christ, that those on whom it is pronounced will return. Otherwise, he would not have pronounced them cursed. Probationers are not accursed. They are prisoners of hope. Everything in the last words of Christ to the wicked is as final as language can make it.

But if the wicked are to be punished until they repent, we say, punishment thus far has

not reformed the original inhabitants of hell. It is incumbent on those who advocate final restoration on this ground, to prove that punishment will at last have a restorative power, or they must show how long the wicked must sin and suffer to make it wrong to punish them any more, even if they continue to sin.

IV.

The terms used with regard to the resurrection of the dead, are proofs of endless retribution.

IN the "Child's Catechism," by Rev. O. A. Skinner, I find the following:*

"Q. Will sin exist in the resurrection?

"A. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.†

"Q. What does the Saviour say respecting our condition when raised?

"A. Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being children of the resurrection."‡

Here, it will be seen, it is assumed that Christ refers to all the dead, and that all, when they are raised, will be the children of God. This, it is understood, is the prevailing belief of Universalists.

* Page 24.

† 1 Cor. xv. 50.

‡ Mark xii. 25.

We read that "no Scripture is of any private interpretation;" in other words, that the meaning must be ascertained by comparing the Scriptures one with another. The parallel passage in Luke reads: "But they that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." *

Our esteemed friend, Mr. Skinner, it seems to me, is led into a mistake by regarding the expression, "children of the resurrection," as meaning all who have part in the resurrection; and since Jesus declares "the children of the resurrection" to be synonymous with "children of God," Mr. S. naturally concludes that all who rise from the dead will be the children of God.

Now, allowing, for the sake of the argument, that the wicked are raised from the dead in their sins, they are not, in the scriptural sense, "children of the resurrection." Rising from the dead does not make us "children of the

* Luke xx. 35, 36.

resurrection." Being the offspring of God does not make us the "children of God;" the wicked would not "come forth to everlasting life," though coming forth to live forever. The term "children of the resurrection" connects with itself the further idea of being qualified for heaven, — "counted worthy to obtain that world." This is confirmed, it seems to me, beyond all question, by one word of the apostle Paul, "I count all things but loss, &c., *if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*"* If, on being raised from the dead, all men are to be fit for heaven, Paul need not have used such "means" to "attain" to it, nor, indeed, any "means" whatever; for he was sure to be raised, like the rest of mankind. Adopt the interpretation just given, viz., that to be accounted worthy to obtain the resurrection from the dead includes the idea of a distinguishing fitness for heaven, body and soul reunited, and we can see why Paul should say he was willing to count all things but loss to attain unto it, — rising from the dead with his perfected nature, body and soul being, in his view,

* Phil. iii. 8-11.

the consummation of preparedness, in every respect, for heaven. If such be Paul's meaning of "attaining unto the resurrection of the dead," the wicked, in their sins, though raised from the dead, do not attain unto the resurrection, and they are not, therefore, in the Saviour's sense, "children of the resurrection."

The Sadducees had said, "Whose wife shall she be in the resurrection?" I will paraphrase the reply of Christ according to my interpretation of his words: "It is, of course, no use for me to answer your question on the supposition that the woman and her seven husbands are not among the saved. They that have done evil 'shall come forth,' as I once said, 'to the resurrection of damnation.' Conjugal relationships among them, or anything relating to happiness, are not supposable. Your inquiry, therefore, relates, of course, to those who are supposed to be in a condition to admit of friendly and loving relationships. As to them, I say, that being accounted worthy to obtain that world, and afterwards such a resurrection as is worthy of the name, they stand in no need of earthly joys, and as they die no more, the necessity for repro-

duction ceases ; they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being, in distinction from the rest of the risen dead, ‘children of the resurrection.’”

The meaning of the phrase is also illustrated by the expression, “children of this world.” Good people are, in one sense, “children of this world,” equally with the bad ; that is, they are *natives* of this world ; and yet we read, “*the children of this world* are wiser in their generation than *the children of light*.”

Thus, the good only are “children of the resurrection,” though all are raised ; as the wicked only are “children of this world,” though bad and good live here together.


Paul said before Felix, and declared that the Jews “themselves also allow” it (for the Sadducees were small in number, though high in rank and power), “*that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.*” *

The idea advanced by Mr. Skinner and others, that all who are raised from the dead are children of God, grows, therefore, out of his mistake, as I view it, in interpreting the expression,

* Acts xxiv. 15.

“children of the resurrection” to mean all the risen dead. Enough has been said in explanation of the opposite, and, as we believe, the more scriptural sense of the phrase. It seems to us unaccountable that any should adopt the idea that all who are raised from the dead will be the children of God, if they have ever read the parables of Christ in Matt. xiii. How does he there say it shall be in the end of the world? “So shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” The same words are repeated at the close of the parable of the net. Surely there will be some of the risen dead who will not be “children of the resurrection,” because they will not be the “children of God.”

I proceed now to the argument to be derived from the declarations of Christ in connection with the resurrection. Christ said, “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.” This he said to illustrate his com-



mission to bestow spiritual life on those who are dead in sin. Then he proceeds at once to assert a power in confirmation of this, in the way of miracle. "Marvel not at this,"—(at my power to regenerate the soul,) "for the hour is coming" (notice that he does not here add—"and now is") "when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation."

"All that are in their graves" includes all who die, from Abel to the last victim of death and the grave. "They that have done evil," of course, then, are there. Now, it appears that they who have done evil will not have atoned, in the intermediate state, for the deeds done in the body, because the Saviour says they will come forth "to the resurrection of damnation." But some of them will have been for a very long time in the separate state. Wherever the rich man went at death, he was "in torment;" there were men before his day, and there have been men since his time, who were as wicked as he. But can sin be punished "in torment" so long?

Peter tells us that there were "spirits" in his day "in prison," to whom Christ preached by the Spirit in the days of Noah, — that is at least three thousand years before. That is a long time for sin to be punished, or even for a sinner to be detained, under the government of a good God. Now, these are yet to "come forth unto the resurrection of damnation." If sin can be so punished by the Infinite Father, and if bodies are to be added to these souls, notwithstanding this already protracted experience of misery, and if they, body and soul, are at the last day to be doomed to "fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," on what principles can all this be explained? Does sin merit such punishment, as the Bible declares has already been inflicted? "Would an earthly parent punish thus?" Is there not enough, in this ascertained infliction of punishment for sin, to destroy all confidence in the government of God, unless sin deserves it all? And if it deserves all this, we know not how much more it may deserve.

It will be observed, in addition, that Christ does not tell us, *they that have done evil, but by the power of discipline, shall have repented*, shall

come forth to the resurrection of life, and the incorrigible *to the resurrection of a further discipline*. How is this? Has not the long interval between death and the resurrection resulted in the salvation of any? Strange that some of the more hopeful of the wicked should not have availed themselves of the opportunity between death and the judgment, to confess and repent.

It is contrary to all analogy that it should be necessary to punish men so long before they repent. On the deck, or in the rigging, of a burning vessel at sea, when death is absolutely certain, it is to be presumed that it does not take a wicked man very long to decide with what feelings he will meet his God. When the soul, after death, finds itself on the way to hell, can we suppose that an opportunity to escape, by repentance, if it were offered, would be rejected? If the only object of God is to reclaim the sinner, he will release him the first moment that he repents. It is so in this world. "And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." If the soul, at the sight

of its punishment, relents and agrees to the terms of pardon, does a Universalist believe that God will say, "No; you must suffer in hell for your sins, even though you have now repented"? Would an earthly father inflict punishment in such a case? But the Bible represents the wicked to have been in hell from the time of their death till the resurrection, and at the resurrection they must yet come forth "to the resurrection of damnation." It is incredible that so much time and so much suffering should be necessary to make sinners repent. Either they repent, and God still continues to punish them "ages on ages;" or they do not repent between death and the resurrection, nor at the judgment-seat of Christ, nor in the immediate prospect of going away to the society and the punishment of the devil and his angels. If a soul which is finally to be reclaimed, can pass through such experience and not repent, it requires larger hope and faith than is common to men to expect that future punishment can be a means of salvation.

That the guilt of a finite creature, man or

angel, should merit thousands of years in hell, or that thousands of years should be requisite to bring him to his right mind, no more accords with our natural feelings, nor with what we call "reason," than does the idea of endless punishment. But if the Bible conveys anything intelligibly to our understanding, it teaches that angels and men have been subjected to punishment for a longer period than is "reasonable" for mere discipline.

Surely, the end of future punishment cannot be merely the recovery of the sinner. Were it so, moreover, it would follow that sin injures no one but the sinner himself. It violates no duties towards God, no interests of fellow-creatures. But the law of God refutes this; the threatenings against those who cause others to fall, and the frequent punishment of men who made others to sin, prove that the punishment of the sinner will have some other end than his reformation.

It being frequently argued that the sins of a finite creature cannot be punished forever, because a finite creature cannot merit infinite

punishment, it will be enough to meet this, in passing, with a single remark, viz.: That, if this be so, then, even if the whole universe should sin forever, the whole universe cannot be punished forever, because the whole universe, after all, is but finite.


V.

The Scriptures teach that the law of God has a curse:—which it has not, if future punishment be disciplinary.

THE punishment, however long and severe, which shall result in restoring a soul to holiness and an endless heaven, under the kind and faithful administration of its heavenly Father, it would be unsuitable to call “a curse.” The theory of Restorationists is, that mercy, having failed to recover sinners in this world, will go on hereafter, in the same direction, with more vigorous methods, till it succeeds,—the same undying, unfaltering love pursuing the wanderer, which here never ceased to plead. Hereafter it will mingle stronger ingredients, and cure the disease of sin. What “curse” there is in such loving-kindness, it is hard to see. In this world we experience just this treatment:

“Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes;
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in;”

and sometimes all the waves and billows go over us. Men are stripped of property, family, health, reputation, and finally they turn to the hand that smites them, grateful that God did not spare the rod for their crying; and they testify that through the loss of all things they have gained eternal bliss. Do they call their afflictions their "curse"? Have they suffered "the curse of the law"? All the ordinary medicines having failed, the physician brings some extreme remedy and saves the patient. Was that a "curse"? He amputates the limb, and thus prolongs a precious life. Did he "curse" the man in doing so? We must, therefore, expunge large parts of the Bible if future punishment be only a wholesome discipline. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." No; he has only redeemed us from a further dispensation of infinite mercy, if punishment be only for discipline; indeed, he prevents the bestowment of a greater proof of love than he himself gave us in dying on the cross; for if, after all his love for us, he will persist in disciplining us in hell, willing to see us suffer that he may finally save us, "herein is



love." The cross is not the climax of his love, but the lake of fire. How it is in any sense a curse, we fail to see. Christians here never look upon the means of sanctification as "the curse of the law." The sinner who by the severest discipline is brought to Christ, feels that he thereby escapes "the curse of the law." But we cannot find that curse, neither here nor hereafter, unless there be punishment which is not intended for the recovery of the sinner.

VI.

The Sentence passed upon the wicked indiscriminately, forbids the idea of discipline in future punishment.


AMONG the impenitent at death and in eternity there is, of course, great variety of character. If the object of future punishment be to reclaim them, the wise and considerate methods of earthly discipline seem to be utterly discarded after death. We hardly need to be reminded how indiscriminate are the threatenings which are said to be inflicted on the wicked. The last sentence evidently regards none of them as probationers; there is no forbearance in it towards the more hopeful; they are all addressed as "ye cursed." We are considering the testimony of the Scriptures. What evidence do they afford of any discrimination in the treatment of the finally impenitent, notwithstanding the vast variety which must

exist among them? I answer, Not any. But the following passages, among others, teach plainly that the doom of the wicked will be indiscriminate, without regard to hopeful diversities of character.

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the book, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works.” Then follows this declaration: “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.” Some say, death and hell are annihilated. But this is not the idea intended, unless the wicked also are then to be annihilated; for the next verse, concluding the subject, says, “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” The obvious meaning is, Death and hell, whatever they represent, will then be added to the lake of fire, whatever that is, as

new ingredients, and to constitute "the second death," and as a final gathering together of all the elements of sorrow and pain, with all the wicked, into one place. With this passage agree the words of Daniel: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The parables of Christ relating to the end of the world recognize only two great divisions of men at the last day. Wheat and tares only are to be in the "field;" good and bad only, in the "net." The wheat is saved, the tares are burned; "the good" in the net are gathered into vessels; "the bad" are none of them dismissed for amendment, or growth, but are "cast away." And Christ tells us that every human being will stand at his right hand, or left hand, "blessed," or "cursed."

Now, when we call to mind the justice of God, and reflect that undue severity, or the laying on man more than is meet, would alienate the confidence of the good from the Most High, and when we consider the declaration of Christ, that sins of ignorance shall receive but "few stripes," and we still perceive that the human



race are evidently to fall at last into two divisions, which will include the whole, with their countless diversities and degrees as to character in each division, we infer that no provision is made for a more hopeful class to enjoy a further trial. All upon the left hand are doomed alike. If there is to be a new probation after death, the Bible surely does not teach it.

VII.

The duration of future punishment is expressed in the New Testament by the terms employed to denote absolute eternity.

THERE is, we all admit, such a thing as *forever*. If the Bible speaks of the natural attributes of God, his eternity is of course brought to view, and there must be a term, or terms, to convey the idea.

Now it is apparent to all, that the words *eternal*, *everlasting*, *forever*, never of themselves signify a limited duration. No one ever learns from these words that the duration to which they refer is less than infinite. The idea of limitation, if it be obtained, always is derived from the context.

It is moreover true, beyond the possibility of dispute, that the words *eternal*, *everlasting*, and *forever*, always mean *the whole* of something. There is no instance in which they are used to

denote a part of a thing's duration. It is always the entire period for which that thing is to last. This no one will call in question.

It is well understood that the words "forever," and "everlasting," are used to express a duration commensurate with the nature of the thing spoken of. "Everlasting mountains" are coeval with creation, and are to endure as long as the earth. "A servant forever" is a servant for life. We cannot take the sense which the word has in connection with a certain thing, and by it prove or disprove anything relating to a totally different thing. We cannot prove, for example, that mountains will not last to the end of time, because *forever*, applied to a servant, means only *for life*. We must consider the nature of the object to which the word is applied. When it is applied to the Most High, of course it means unlimited duration. Now the words which convey the idea of absolute eternity are applied, for example, to mountains, and to future punishment, and to the being and government of God. This, then, is certain: Because *forever*, when applied to some things, does not mean absolute eternity, it does not follow that it

does not mean eternity when applied to future retribution. If it were so, we could not convey the idea of the eternity of God; for it could be said that *forever* is sometimes applied to a limited duration. That is true; now if this proves that future punishment is not forever, it must also prove that the being of God is not forever.

Two things are beyond dispute: 1. *Forever* and *everlasting* are applied to future retributions. 2. These terms always mean *the whole*, as to duration, of that with which they stand connected. If applied to life, it is the whole of life; if to the existence of the world, it is the entire period of its existence; if to a covenant, the covenant is either without limit as to time, or it is the whole of the duration which the subject permits; and when applied to Jehovah, it refers to his whole eternity.

What, then, does it mean, when applied to future retribution? It always means *the whole* of something. Is it the whole of future existence? No one can base a denial of it on the ground that the word, when applied to human life, means only a few years, or a limited duration when applied to the earth. For, how is it when

applied to God and the happiness of heaven? It is certainly the place of any who deny endless retributions, to show that the words cannot mean *the whole of future existence* when applied to punishment. The words mean the whole of future existence when applied, by the use of the same Greek words in the same passages, to the happiness of the righteous. The objector must show that when applied to the future life, they mean only a part of it, notwithstanding they always mean *the whole* of everything else with which they stand connected.

Such are some of the considerations, drawn from the word of God, which satisfy my own mind that retributions after death are without end. Mr. Foster speaks of it as “the general, not very far short of universal, judgment of divines.” Such multitudes of the best of men and women are still firmly persuaded of its truth, that we are led to say, there must be a foundation for it in the word of God,—and for this reason: If mankind could have divested themselves of the conviction that it is not found in the word of God, it is reasonable to think

that it would long since have been discarded. Nay, rather, who would have invented such a doctrine? Good men would not have palmed it upon the world, for more reasons than one. Besides, many an error has been exploded; it is unaccountable, if this be error, that it should have kept its hold upon the human mind. No Protestant, it would seem, would quote a belief in purgatory as a parallel case. We have no coercion, nor any kind of motive to bias our minds towards this article of faith. We use no terms on this subject,—certainly we approve of none, which are not derived from the Bible. We are not superstitious, nor fanatical, nor priest-ridden, nor cruel; and we think we have far more exalted reasons for believing in the infinite love of God than any have who do not see it, as we do, in the atoning cross. However good and amiable the opposers of this doctrine may be, they will not assume that they are more humane, more pitiful, more gentle, more the friends of God and man, than those who believe it. In view of the hold which it has on the minds of men, it would be so great a marvel that the doctrine should not be found in the

Scriptures, that nothing could be more astounding, not even the fearful truth itself.

And that it may be seen, further, how we are confirmed in our persuasion that we read the Bible aright, I refer not only, as above, to the convictions of believers that the doctrine is scriptural, but to the positive statements of some who have rejected it.

Mr. Foster tells us: "And the language of Scripture is formidably strong, — so strong that it must be an argument of extreme cogency that would authorize a limited interpretation."

Dr. Thomas Burnett, an English divine, writing in favor of final restoration, says: "Human nature revolts from the very name of future punishment. But the sacred Scriptures seem to be on the other side."*

One effect of the recent discussion of this subject in this city has been to elicit from a distinguished advocate of final restoration, the following statement:

"And yet I freely say that I do not find the doctrine of the ultimate salvation of all souls

* "Natura humana abhorret ab ipso nomine pœnârûm æternarum. At Scriptura sacra a partibus contrariis stare videtur." — *De Statu Mort. et Resurg.*, p. 228, 2d ed.

clearly stated in any text or in any discourse that has ever been reported from the lips of Christ. I do not think that we can fairly maintain that the final restoration of all men is a prominent and explicit doctrine of the four gospels." *

To this, I am able to add the explicit testimony of Rev. Theodore Parker. Wishing to verify a quotation which a friend had tried in vain to find for me in one of Mr. Parker's volumes, I addressed a note to Mr. Parker, asking him to give me the reference. The following polite and obliging answer will speak for itself. All the italics are Mr. Parker's.

"BOSTON, Dec. 1, 1858.

"REV. DR. ADAMS.

"Dear Sir: I am ill now, and cannot recollect that the passage you refer to occurs in any of my volumes; yet it might, in several. I am sure it does in some *printed sermons*—pamphlets, but cannot now say which. I will try to find the passage.

"*To me it is quite clear that Jesus taught the doctrine of eternal damnation, if the Evangelists—the first three, I mean—are to be treated as*

* Rev. T. S. King's Two Discourses, p. 5.

inspired. I can understand his language in no other way. But as the Protestant sects start with the notion — which to me is a monstrous one — that the words of the New Testament are all miraculously inspired by God, and so infallibly true ; and as this doctrine of eternal damnation is so revolting to all the humane and moral feelings of our nature, men said ‘ the words must be interpreted in another way.’ So as the Unitarians have misinterpreted the New Testament to prove that the *Christos* of the fourth gospel had no preëxistence, the Universalists misinterpreted other passages of the gospels to show that Jesus of Nazareth never taught eternal damnation. So the geologists misinterpret Genesis to-day — to save the divine infallible character of the text.

Yours truly,

“ THEODORE PARKER.”

It was but fair to let Mr. Parker state his whole belief on this subject. Thus, in his view, if the Evangelists are to be believed, Christ taught that future retributions are to be endless.

There is nothing to be surprised at in this ; but it will be seen that it is not without good reason that those who receive the Bible implicitly as the word of God, have so generally

believed in endless retribution as a doctrine of Scripture.

The question then arises, whether our human instincts, or divine revelations, whether man the sinner, or God the sovereign, shall dictate the penalty of sin? Mr. Foster, seeking relief to his mind from the terrible idea of endless sin and misery, says of the doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked, "It would be a prodigious relief." Some one respectfully replies to him that "the divine government is not for the relief of the imagination, but for the relief of the universe."

The question is often asked, How, allowing endless retribution to be a scriptural doctrine, can you have peace of mind in your belief?

I answer, We believe that no one will perish who does not reject the Saviour of the world; or, if he be a heathen, does not sin against light and conviction sufficient to save him.

It has an effect to quiet our minds when we reflect that our thoughts and feelings at the loss of the soul were surpassed in Him whose soul for us was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Tears were shed by him over sinners — "God


hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." If the thought of endless retribution is so terrible to us who know so little about it, we are constrained to think that there was never any sorrow like unto the sorrow of him, who loved us and gave himself for us, when he sees that he must, nevertheless, pronounce upon any for whom he died, the sentence of that everlasting punishment from which he became incarnate, and died to save us. Great as our astonishment and sorrow are, we cannot forget that they are infinitely less than his. If, through grace, we are saved, we look to him, who knows what his own tears have been, to wipe away all tears from our eyes.

We also consider that the basis of future punishment is a chosen and cherished state of mind, which leads men here to reject Christ, notwithstanding his known character and his efforts for them. This may lead them still to reject him; for, as already stated, we do not find that even the loss of heaven and the experience of chains under darkness, have reconciled lost angels to God. While they choose to sin, therefore, we

see no injustice in their being punished, even if they sin forever.

That the Bible contains forewarnings and instructions which ought to be sufficient to deter men from future misery, we learn even from the reply of Abraham to the rich man in hell. The rich man desired that Lazarus might be sent to his father's house with testimony concerning that "place of torment." Abraham replied that "they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." The rich man could have easily reminded Abraham, if truth permitted, that there is nothing about that place in the Old Testament. He makes no such answer, but pleads the supposed efficacy of a visitor from the unseen world. Abraham replied, that such a visitor could have no effect on those who do not believe the testimony of the Old Testament on that subject. All this is from the lips of Jesus Christ.

Inasmuch as we cast no blame on God for the present condition and conduct of cannibals, and pagans, and atheists, and blasphemers, and slave-traders, and every other description of wicked men, (neither do they themselves impute blame



to him,) we do not feel that God will be responsible for the endless wickedness and misery of sinners; nor will they charge him with injustice more than they now do.

We believe that the God of the New Testament is the same unchangeable God of the Old Testament; that Christ has not modified the divine character, nor altered one principle of the divine administration; but that the New Testament reveals the mercy of God in full-orbed beauty, though its outlines were always visible from the beginning; that all which was terrible in the God who destroyed the old world, and Sodom and Gomorrha, and cast down rebel angels from heaven to hell, is still the same, and that when mercy has failed under the New Testament to recover sinners, the God of the Old Testament and of the New will be their Judge and King. We read that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "For our God is a consuming fire." And we have our choice, to love and serve such a God as this, or to reject him and take the consequences. Our private experience persuades us that He is good. He has always been just and kind, gentle,

easy to be entreated. In all our afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved us. Knowing this, his stern, uncompromising hatred of sin, his power to inflict suffering and to look upon it forever, if necessary, give us confidence in Him. We may need such attributes for the foundation of our safety and of our confidence in God, as much as that attribute which we now separate from the rest of his character and call his love.


We believe that the Bible teaches — for surely it follows of course from all which has now been adduced — that some proportion of pain and misery will forever exist under the government of God. The idea that they are to be wholly expurgated is contradicted by the Scriptures, and is mere fancy. But the scale of things being hereafter enlarged to our apprehension, and the reasons for one thing and another which are now but partially explained, being more fully apparent, we think we see in the present feelings of good citizens with regard to law, and punishments, and the officers of justice, how future pain and misery, in their relation to the infinitely blessed system of gov-

ernment over a universe of free agents, will by no means diminish the happiness of that multitude of obedient souls which no man can number.

I have always been struck by the consideration, that the passages from which Universalists infer the final happiness of all men, do not occur in the Bible in connection with the punishment of the wicked. This is of the utmost importance. It is one presumptive proof that, occurring as they do apart from any mention of the punishment of the wicked, they belong to other subjects. And so we find them, in connection with the blessedness of the righteous, the ultimate victories of Christ over his enemies, his final reign, and the happiness of heaven. But we look in vain for passages where promises, prophecies, hints of ultimate restoration, occur in connection with the subject of future punishment. It will not be disputed that there are passages which seem to teach future endless punishment; and the attempt is to show that they are "metaphorical." But some appear to think that *metaphorical* means *fictitious*,

unreal; on the contrary, "metaphorical" language is generally the stronger way of asserting anything, being resorted to for the purpose of intensifying the expression. But how remarkable it is that we find no clause nor phrase, neither literal, nor "metaphorical," limiting the main drift of a passage which speaks of future endless punishment, or suggesting the idea of restoration. The bold, terrific language of Scripture, asserting the future punishment of the wicked, has not one word of qualification.

We frequently meet with such representations and illustrations as the following, in modern writers, — from whom I had intended to quote several passages; but the following statement of their views will suffice: — The soul is God's child. Will a good mother ever cast away her offspring? No; neither will the great "Mother of us all," — the love of God. The worst of men — the Judases, the Neros, and Caligulas — will at last fulfil their career of sin and sorrow, and return to the bosom of God. As the earth in some parts of its orbit drives away from the sun, but soon comes "rounding back again," so every creature that God ever made, Satan and



all (if there be any Satan), will at last accomplish its terrible career, and, passing its solstice, rejoice in a new moral existence.

The brief reply to all such fancies is this: Have we a Bible? Does it give us any intimation of such a revolution, such an orbit, for the lost soul? We read of "wandering stars, to whom is reserved the mist of darkness forever and ever;" but where does the Bible, in speaking of the spirit launching forth on its aphelion, intimate that its path is a cycle, and not a straight line?

We see one part of the race "go away into everlasting punishment." But this is said to be merely "a metaphor." We will be grateful even for "a metaphor," if there be any, representing their return.

We have lately been furnished, from high authority in the Universalist denomination, with some of the principal proof texts in the discourses of Christ in favor of the salvation of all men. They occur in the review already spoken of, (in the preface to this article,) written by Rev. Dr. Thomas Whittemore, in which

he endeavors to answer Rev. T. S. King's assertion, that he could not find any text or discourse of Christ which contains the doctrine of the final happiness of all men. Dr. Whittemore, of course, would here bring forth some of his strong proofs, for he says of Mr. King's discourse: "We think they will do as much to break down Universalism as to break down the doctrine of endless misery." The following are Dr. Whittemore's quotations from the words of Christ, to prove that he taught the final salvation of all men.

1. "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."* Dr. Whittemore gives an extended exposition of the discourse of Christ at the well of Samaria, which gave occasion to these words of the Samaritans; and he says: "Jesus Christ, let it be remembered, is declared to be the Saviour of the world; and how could he be justly called the Saviour of the world if the world shall never be saved?"†

2. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father." This is a major premise. "All that the Father hath given me shall come to me," is

* John iv. 42.

† p. 390.

the minor premise. "To come to Christ is to become a Christian."* This involves the *ergo* of the proposition. He adds, "We have by no means exhausted our proof;"† and he gives us,

3. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." We have the word of Christ for it,— "will draw all men unto me."‡

4. "Jesus answered, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." "If angels are holy, mankind are to be holy; if angels are to be happy, mankind are to be happy." "This is a distinct and positive declaration of the purity and happiness of all men." "How, then," Dr. W. says, "can we adopt the language of Mr. King, and say, 'I do not find the doctrine,' &c. Strange declaration! Jesus joined two great facts together, the resurrection of all men, and their exaltation to the condition of angels."§

Such passages are, in the opinion of Dr. Whittemore, a plain, obvious refutation, from Christ himself, of that, in Dr. Whittemore's view, dan-

* p. 391.

† p. 392.

‡ p. 395.

§ p. 395.

gerous assertion by Mr. King, viz., "the ultimate salvation of all souls is not clearly taught in any text or discourse in the gospels."

The principal topics which have now been considered are these :

The Scriptures reveal a future state of reward and punishment.

They teach that the body and soul will be joined in future happiness and misery.

Christ teaches that God can destroy both body and soul in hell. If God cannot morally do this, the declaration is unintelligible ; it answers no purpose of instruction.

Future punishment will therefore be a natural operation of moral laws, sustained and made effectual by the hand of God upon the sinner, who, by his state of depravity, will be made susceptible to misery forever.

The essential elements of misery remain in the wicked after death.

Redemption by Christ is represented as having for its object salvation from final perdition.

The work of the Holy Spirit as a part of redemption, and the unpardonable sin against Him,

prove that the present is the final effort to save men.

None of the passages relied on to prove final restoration occur in connection with the subject of future punishment, but with the reign of Christ, and the happiness of the righteous.

No passage in the Bible discloses the future repentance of the wicked.

Promises of restoration, made to sinners who in this world were to become penitent, always occur in connection with threatenings and doom. No such promises are made in connection with the threatenings of future punishment, or with the final doom of the wicked.

The Bible closes with an express declaration of the future unchangeableness of character.

There are no prophetic visions in the New Testament which contemplate deliverance from hell, and corresponding to visions of God's ancient people in captivity, and of their release and restoration.

The fall of angels, and of men, is a confirmatory argument in favor of future punishment, seeing that if God did not keep them from falling, he can consistently refuse to restore them.

The terms used with regard to the resurrection of the dead, show that the wicked will have experienced no change since death, but will come forth from their graves to the resurrection of damnation.

If the wicked are punished hereafter merely for their own good, there is no such thing as sin against God or our neighbor;—which is contrary to Scripture.

The law of God has no curse if future punishment be in all cases disciplinary.

The sentence passed upon the impenitent indiscriminately, forbids the idea of discipline in future punishment.

It is inconceivable that fallen angels and “the spirits in prison,” who were on earth “in the days of Noah,” should not long ago have repented of their sins, if repentance were the object sought by their punishment.

If death, and the scenes within the veil previous to the judgment-day, do not effect the repentance in the wicked, there is no ground to think that their banishment from Christ with the fallen angels, at the last day, is intended for their reformation, or would effect it.

“Forever” and “everlasting” always denote *the whole*, as to duration, of that with which they stand connected.

If a finite being cannot justly be punished forever, then, if the whole universe should sin forever, it could not be punished forever, because the whole intelligent universe also is finite.

The duration of future punishment is expressed in the New Testament by the terms employed to denote absolute eternity in cases which are never questioned.

The provision made in the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God for pardon and salvation, and the abundant calls to repentance, and offers of eternal life, through Christ, to all, will make the final impenitence of sinners inexcusable, and their misery will be of their own procuring.

I may be allowed, in closing, to quote the words of the apostle Paul, which those who preach and are set for the defence of the gospel, must not hesitate to adopt: “For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish: To the one we

are the savor of death unto death, and to the other, the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" *

Pursuing my ordinary labors, a Universalist and Unitarian clergyman of this city invited me to repeat, in his pulpit, a sermon on this subject, to which he had listened in my church. As I profess not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, which, in my view, involves the doctrine of endless punishment, I complied with his request. This has led to the present communication. Had mere controversy been my object, I would not have sought to discuss the scriptural view of this subject, with such admissions before me as those of Rev. T. S. King and Rev. Theodore Parker. When I read them, I thought that one whose only object was to get the advantage of an opponent, might be justified in feeling with regard to the doctrine of Restoration, as Joab did when he found Absalom in the tree, and he blew a trumpet, and all the people returned from the battle. Such men as Mr. King and Mr. Parker, seeing the doctrine of endless punishment in the literal speech of the Bible, as

* 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

interpreted by us, and rejecting its inspiration, partly because they find it there, relieves us greatly from the need of holding controversies on this subject. Controversy has not been my motive. I have sought to persuade my reader to flee with me for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

In the foregoing discussion, I am not aware that there is anything which intentionally reflects upon the understanding or motives of others. It has cost no effort to abstain from being, in any way, derisory, or satirical, or contemptuous. Conscious only of kindness and good-will to all, and grateful for this opportunity to state and defend important principles, I am,

The reader's friend and servant,

N. ADAMS.



REASONABLENESS
OF
FUTURE, ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

12 BURROUGHS PLACE.

REV. DR. ADAMS.

Dear Sir: It was my privilege to be one of your auditors last Sunday evening, when you delivered the discourse, listened to with great interest by a large assembly, on the "Reasonableness of Eternal Punishment."

I take the liberty to address you, with the request that you will repeat the discourse in the Hollis Street Church next Sunday evening. Members of the committee of my society, and many others of the parishioners, express to me the hope that you may find it consistent with your engagements and in accordance with your sense of duty to accept this invitation. Our church is very spacious; on such an occasion I doubt not that it would be crowded with an audience of "Liberal Christians." I am sure that they would eagerly embrace an opportunity to hear so able an advocate of "Orthodoxy" upon a theme so important as the eternal punishment, by the Infinite Father, of all who fail to comply with the terms of grace which He has established for His children during this brief life.

Let me assure you that, if you accept this offer, the pulpit shall be entirely at your disposal, precisely as if it were your own. And let me say that I expect no such offer in return. If you consent, I shall simply urge my people to attend your service, and listen, as I shall listen a second time, with the respect your abilities deserve, and with the earnestness which

the momentous question you discuss — about which we differ so widely — should inspire in us all.

In the hope of an early reply, I am respectfully yours,

T. S. KING.

REV. T. S. KING.

4 BOYLSTON PLACE.

My Dear Sir: Your note of the 21st inst. reached me this morning, and I need not say that it has greatly surprised and deeply interested me. The sermon was written in 1852, and was then preached to my own people on a Sabbath morning, in the ordinary course of ministerial labor. The subject has weighed much on my own mind during the present religious interest, and this alone induced me to present it at my lecture last Sabbath evening. That it did not strike you and others as an unfeeling exhibition of mere theological opinion upon an infinitely important and very trying subject, is truly gratifying to me.

Your invitation to repeat the sermon in your church, next Sabbath evening, is conveyed in such terms that I feel impelled to accept it, and I will therefore comply with your request. It is due to you as well as to myself to say, that parts of the discourse, as originally written, were omitted last Sabbath evening, and their place was supplied from brief notes, and by a few extemporaneous remarks. All this I will endeavor to repeat; and I infer from the tenor of your note that should I further explain and re-enforce some of my statements, it will but accord with your wishes. I ought, moreover, to add that none but myself can properly be held responsible for my sentiments and expressions on this subject, however much I may suppose my views to agree with theirs.

With sincere regard, I am, dear sir, very truly yours,

N. ADAMS.

REASONABLENESS

OF

FUTURE, ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.



For the wages of sin is death. — ROM. vi. 23.

LET us endeavor to think how it would be with us, should it come to pass, as the fool in his heart wishes it to be, that there is no God; that God is dethroned. Some disaster has happened in the universe, and rival spirits, we will suppose, have triumphed: Malignity has supplanted benevolence; wickedness is enthroned over virtue; chance does not rule, but the government of all worlds is in the hands of the enemies of God. Prayer now is useless; public worship may as well cease. Bibles are like old books of history, and nothing more, for the promises of the Bible are now like irre-

deemable bills. Repentance and faith are useless. The deity to whom this world has fallen by lot is Mammon, or Moloch; or it may be that Satan himself, out of spite for all which he has suffered here, takes it under his charge. Everything now is perverted; darkness is put for light, evil for good, bitter for sweet. The strongest must rule; to get all he can, by all means, is the governing principle of every man; no rights are respected; Virtue is driven out of the world; her defences and her great reward have perished. Everywhere we are assailed with the sight of these words, and with this cry: No God! No God! Whether the devils have power to control the elements and rule the heavenly bodies, or whether all things will rush to ruin, is a fearful question, which every day and hour appalls the stoutest heart. For, instead of One, Almighty, Supreme Being, who can say, as formerly, "I am God, and there is none else," and instead of that unity of purpose, and independent will, and unrivalled might, which governed the universe safely and happily, a band of devils, we suppose, is at the head of affairs, the superior demon holding his sway by

force over the rest, or by their assent; but no unity of purpose, or permanence, can be expected in things controlled by hateful and hating creatures. We look up to the heavens; they no longer "declare the glory of God," but telegraph his discomfiture. As one says:

"What were the universe without a God?

A mob of worlds, careering round the sky."

Law everywhere would be likely to be mob law. If we could, by armies and any sacrifice of treasure and blood, reinstate Jehovah in his throne, our own self-interest, and sense of justice, and outraged feelings, would impel us to any and every effort to drive Satan and his hosts from heaven, and shut them up in hell as long as they should continue rebellious; and the return of the day when God Almighty should resume his peaceful reign in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, would be a jubilee. But, alas! if the almighty arm, so called, could not prevail against his enemies, how could mortals help him? Let it once be that usurpers have the throne of God, and annihilation would be coveted by every one of us

more eagerly than any despairing suicide ever yet longed to prove or to find it true.

Every one of us has done his part to bring about this state of things. Should the natural feelings and conduct of each of us be extended indefinitely, all this would virtually happen. There might be more refinement in wickedness in some places than in others, to suit the tastes and habits of different people; but Greece and Rome, the models of ancient cultivation and refinement, are, with "the whole world lying in wickedness," described by an unerring pen in the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and in terms which make every reader blush with shame at human nature. Its degeneracy and corruption, from Cain to the days of the Canaanites, and ever since, when unrestrained by the grace of God, have been such that nation after nation made it necessary for God to wipe them out of existence, "as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down."* Volney surveys the "ruins of empires," and mourns, saying, "To what purpose is this waste?" and he impeaches the wisdom of his God. He will

* 2 Kings xxi. 13.

not consider that sin is the procuring cause of national, as it is of individual ruin, and that God has but fulfilled the threatening, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."* "Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."†

Sin is the antagonist of God. If sin prevails, there is "no God." For wherever, even upon a small scale, sin prevails, God is banished. Let its power be supreme, and practically there is no God.

Where is sin? Who ever saw it? Where is its habitation? Sin exists nowhere but in free, intelligent creatures. There is no sin separate from a sinner. Whoever, therefore, is a sinner, is sin impersonated. In the greatest measure, we suppose, sin exists in Satan; then in his companions; then in lost men; then in living men. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." If we say, The Asiatic cholera is in Boston, we mean that there are those here who have the cholera. There is no sin but in the hearts of fallen spirits and men.


* Is. lx. 12.

† Ps. ii. 9.

There is not one of us who, when placed in circumstances where God and his requirements or prohibitions came in conflict with our wishes, has not fought against God. This is no more than the powers of hell would do on a larger scale, if they had the opportunity.

The difference is this: There is a plague, we will say, in London, which is cutting down a thousand in a day. Men think and speak of it as an awful scourge. But you are at Bath, or Carlisle, sick with the plague, alone, and you are ready to die. There is no difference between your plague and the plague in London. All the symptoms which the thousand victims in London have, you exhibit; but you are not in a community where the disease is triumphant. But it is killing you; it does no more in London, only that it has gained the upper hand, and puts the inhabitants to flight.

In like manner, sin, disobedience to God, and the dislike of him from which it springs, is the same in substance everywhere. If we dislike God, his attributes, his requirements, his prohibitions, and if infinite mischief is not the consequence, it is because our influence is



hemmed in and overruled; just as we might have a contagious disorder, and yet such preventives be employed as would keep it from doing much harm.

Though sin has not extended in the universe so far as to dethrone God, we have most perfect illustrations of its awful power.

There was a time when all the sin which was in the world was enclosed in one sinful wish in the breast of one woman. She had permission to eat of every tree but one, and that one God prohibited, saying, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." A transient thought, immediately repressed or disapproved, would not have been sin; for, as Milton says,

"Evil into the mind of God or man
May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
No spot or blame behind;"*

but she indulged that wish, and hankered after that fruit; and in that sinful wish all the sin of earth once lay. That wish became an act; and now let him who would write the sins and woes of earth first count for us the snow-flakes of five

* Paradise Lost, B. V. l. 117.

thousand winters, and tell us the number of drops in all the rivers and oceans. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners;" and their history is the history of wars, lust, intemperance, violence. O sin! what hast thou done? What canst thou not do?

There is another illustration still more affecting. We see a company of evil spirits whom Christ is casting out of two men. They hold a conversation with the Saviour. If they are mere diseases, and not intelligent creatures capable of reasoning, but are only personified maladies, who are making a truce with Christ, and if he countenances the delusion that this scene is not even so real a thing as a masquerade, but a fiction throughout, while questions are put and answers given, requests made and permission granted, there is an end to all confidence in language, and indeed the reality of everything may be questioned. "And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep."* They did not mean the sea, for thither they soon went of their own choice. The same word, in Rev. xx. 3, is translated "bottomless

* Luke viii. 31.

pit." They are called "evil spirits." But if they were intelligent creatures, they were fallen creatures; for we suppose that God would not create a demon; and allowing even that they were the souls of lost men, or an order of beings who came into existence, as we did, with a fallen nature, probation must have been allotted to them — a chance to be saved; for we shall agree that no infant, nor any other being, can be lost merely for having a fallen nature. These fallen spirits, then, were once surrounded by virtuous influences; they may have been angels; and if they were, nay, even if they sang together with other morning stars, and shouted for joy with all the sons of God, at the birth of the world, they fell no further, comparatively, than the sons or daughters of men have fallen here, from homes of purity and circles of refinement, from pulpits and the table of Christ. "So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine."* O sin, what hast thou done? This whole legion of devils, moreover, had taken possession of two poor creatures, and made them maniacs "exceed-

* Matt. viii. 31.

ing fierce." Why should more than one malignant spirit wish to possess one human body? What mysteries there are in sin, and "depths of Satan"!

The difference between sin as it existed in these demons and as it exists in our breasts, is the same as between the loathsome victim of the plague, and the man who is just taken sick with it. There was a time when angels in heaven, who, the Bible tells us, were "cast down to hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment,"* were but just infected with this malady of sin. There was a time when Eve was but just attacked with it. We are in the early stage of the disorder; but we have it, and if no remedy be applied, time only is wanted to make us desperate. If placed in circumstances where we could communicate the infection to unfallen creatures, like Eve to Adam, and thus to a race, God only can measure the consequences. Many a human spirit, if not redeemed from its sins, the child now sleeping in its cradle, is capable, in the progress of its being, of going forth to tempt and ruin some

* 2 Peter ii. 4.

fair world, and to become the "prince of the power of the air" to that fallen province of God's empire, and to rival the arch apostate angel in his direful history.

Is this tremendous thing in us — this antagonism to God? this enemy to the universe? If so, what is it?

"Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God."* The sum of all which God requires of man, and prohibits, is comprehended in the ten commandments, every one of which, in thought, word, or deed, we have broken. The Saviour gives us a still more simple summary of our duty: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength;" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."† We have failed to do this; we love and serve the creature more than the Creator. Do we avoid that which God disapproves? Do we study to do that which he loves? If we have a family, do we call them together morning and night, and read to them out of God's word,

* Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism, 14.

† Mark xii. 30, 31.

and before them bow the knee to God? Is it natural to do this? If not, do we give evidence that we love God? His blessings we highly prize; his natural attributes we are ready to adore; but God, with the moral attributes which the Bible ascribes to him, we do not love. On the contrary, we have feelings and thoughts, and we do things, which are "enmity against God,"* and, carried out into other situations, and exasperated by opposition to our wills, and their influence being sufficiently extended, they would supplant his throne.

If we were in the place of God, we may imagine how we would regard sin. He comprehends the interests of all intelligent beings, and sees that sin is fatal to his government over them, so that, wherever sin reigns, there, and in that proportion, there is no God. It would be better that the universe should perish than that harm should come to the infinite God; but sin would not only destroy the universe; for, if it could prevail, it would dethrone God. Let us place ourselves where we could see and feel what sin would do if it were aimed against us,

* Rom. viii. 7.

and our authority, and the happiness of a universe for whose welfare we were responsible. How would we legislate about that which would inevitably ruin other worlds and races, as it has ours? What would we do to prevent it, and to reform and save the rebellious? Should we do anything? We will take it for granted that we would.

But human wisdom and earthly love could not do more than God has done to save sinners. In the threefold distinction of the divine nature, we hold there is that which is called "the Word," which "was in the beginning with God," and which "was God." * Then, seemingly guarding against the Sabellian theory of "manifestation," it is said again, "The same was in the beginning with God;" not therefore God filling a human body and soul with influence, and so making a mere demonstration of divinity, but it was the Word, who was not only God, but ("great is the mystery") "with God," indicating both union and distinctness. He became flesh, and dwelt among us.

His great object was to take the sinner's place

* John i. 1.

as a sacrifice for sins. He did not interpose between a wrathful being and his victims. For the sake, perhaps, of keeping up in the human mind the idea of Deity unmixed with our nature, the Father is familiarly called "God," and yet as often "God the Father," which word "Father" would be, in numerous instances, an unwarrantable pleonasm, if "our heavenly Father," and not a person in the Trinity, were intended. "The Word," by union with human nature, it is supposed, was constituted "Son," and so acted in a subordinate capacity; and so we are told, without further explanation of the mystery in the Godhead, that "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That he died, we know; that he did not die for his own sins, we know; * that "in due time Christ died for the ungodly," we know.† "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."‡ It is said of him, "Whom God hath set forth to be a

* Dan. ix. 26.

† Rom. v. 6.

‡ Is. liii. 5.

propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." * The terms of salvation for every penitent sinner are, " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." † " He that believeth on him is not condemned." " Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." ‡ " If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." § All are invited to accept pardon and salvation by pleading the sufferings and death of this Redeemer ; and it is then said, " There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." ||

To enforce these offers of mercy, and to supply all needful help in being saved, there is One, equal in his nature with the Father and the

* Rom. iii. 25.

† Acts xvi. 31.

‡ Rom. v. 9.

§ 1 John ii. 1, 2.

|| Rom. viii. 1.

Son, to whom is committed the work of carrying redemption into effect in the hearts of men. The Holy Ghost, by the plan of salvation, succeeds Christ, and strives with men. The Bible is put into their hands; an order of men is appointed for the special purpose of being "ambassadors for Christ," "as though God did beseech them," and they pray them "in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." * One day in seven is set apart by divine authority for special attention to this subject. A most touching ordinance is divinely appointed, which every month or two appeals to their senses, and most powerfully to their hearts. It is no less than a simple representation, by two appropriate symbols, of the body and blood of the Redeemer pleading with man, "This do in remembrance of me." † Frequently one and another is converted from his sins, and accepts this offered mercy; others confess the reality and beauty of the change, but they continue in their own chosen ways. Members of their families experience this change, and God thus draws them "by the cords of a man, with bands of love;" "but,"

* 2 Cor. v. 20.

† Luke xxii. 19.

he is compelled to add, "they knew not that I healed them." * And now the angel of death comes into their dwellings; all the softening influences of sickness, and the benign influences of sorrow, persuade them to be reconciled to God, and all in vain. From lips soon to close in death, appeals are made to them with all the love of a wife, or child, or pastor; or, it may be, a partner in business sends word from his dying pillow, and asks them, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" †

God in his word has told them that he will confine his efforts for their salvation within the limits of their natural life, and with urgent love he says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." ‡

Among the closing words of the Bible these accents fall on their ears like the last notes of a bell that calls to the house of prayer: "He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is

* Hosea xi. 4, 3.

† Matt. xvi. 26.

‡ Eccl. ix. 10.

filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous let him be righteous still, and he that is holy let him be holy still." * The vast majority of all who receive the Bible as the word of God unite and testify "how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures;" † that there is pardon through his blood; that he "delivered us from the wrath to come;" ‡ and that no probation after death is intimated in the Bible.

But notwithstanding all this, men refuse to repent of their sins, and they persist in their repugnance to God. They go into the next world from amidst these influences of mercy, in total disregard of all which has been done to save them.

The question is, What is it reasonable for them to expect? Only two things can take place: Further measures will be used to reclaim them, or, They must be forever given up to sin and its consequences.

It is not for man to say what shall now take place. Will he insist that the sinner shall have no further trial? He must not prescribe limits to the mercy of God. "For my thoughts are

* Rev. xxii. 11.

† 1 Cor. xv. 3.

‡ 1 Thess. i. 10.

not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." * Will man insist that the sinner ought to have another period of probation? He is equally at fault if he dictates to the justice of God. Revelation is the only source of knowledge upon this subject. Those of our race who have received the word of God implicitly, and have interpreted that book, as they do all writings, according to its most obvious import, have, with inconsiderable exceptions, believed that eternal punishment is revealed. But it is with the reasonableness of the doctrine that we are now concerned. There is not a doctrine of revelation — God forbid! — which is against reason. It may be above reason in many things, but it never contradicts either the known and established principles of the human conscience and understanding, nor the palpable truths of human experience and observation. Now, upon this ground we plant ourselves, and say, that, so far as we can judge, endless future punishment is reasonable. He who disbelieves the evangelical system cannot prove the doctrine to be reasonable. Finding future eternal pun-

* Is. lv. 8.

ishment disclosed in the Bible, it commends itself to our understanding and conscience as a reasonable truth.

One objection to it is this. It is said, —

“Eternal punishment is too long as a penalty for the sins of a short life.”

None but God can judge here. The important question is, Was the transgressor duly notified? He is in a foreign land, and is made fully acquainted with a law and its penalty, which he thinks is exceedingly severe. The government, however, have special reasons for the enactment; but he prefers the risk of the penalty to the loss of a certain benefit, and is without excuse, for he transgressed with his eyes open.

Is it just for one to lose so much in consequence of so brief a period of transgression? This depends on the information possessed beforehand. A passenger by the steamer does not expect that, if notice of the hour of departure is communicated to him, the bell will toll a whole day, or even an hour for his dilatoriness. He may by losing the voyage, change the prospect of life, and one half minute can decide whether it shall be so.

Forgery, arson, manslaughter, conceived and executed in the briefest space of time, have no valid defence in the shortness of the time occupied by the deed. A day is not too short in which to commit a crime which will be punished by imprisonment for life. We take away a man's whole life, and he a young man, for an act committed within one hour.

If a note has matured, bankruptcy is not arrested because the promisor received only one notice.

We probably never heard it objected to eternal *salvation*, that it is too long to be the consequence and reward of this brief life. That heaven is promised to the righteous, and that it will be without end, no one doubts. But what if we should say, as we might with as good reason as in objecting to endless punishment, "Life is too short in which to merit heaven ; we ought to be subjected after death to a longer probation, be placed in new circumstances of trial for a period that should bear some proportion to the greatness of the reward"? What period of trial would be thought an equivalent for measureless felicity, it would be hard indeed

to say ; and we are therefore led to the principle that the length of time in which good or evil actions take place is no proper measure of their desert. We act upon this principle in everything.

Much use is made of this objection to endless punishment as urged by the late Rev. John Foster, an evangelical Baptist, of England. He writes a letter to a young ministerial friend who had asked his views on the subject of endless punishment. Mr. Foster says that he has made much less research into this subject than his young friend had probably done, and that he had been "too content, perhaps, to let an opinion or impression admitted in early life dispense with protracted inquiry and various reading." He then says: "The general, not very far short of universal, judgment of divines in affirmation of the doctrine of eternal punishment, must be acknowledged a weighty consideration. It is a fair question, Is it likely that so many thousands of able, learned, benevolent, and pious men should all have been in error? And the language of Scripture is formidably strong ; so strong that it must be an argument


of extreme cogency that would authorize a limited interpretation."

But his answer to all this is, in his own words, — "the stupendous idea of eternity," — upon which he proceeds to dwell with great power.

To this, one reply may be, that the great and good men of all evangelical denominations, as capable as Mr. Foster of appreciating the awful idea of eternity, "have generally," and, as he himself says, "not very far short of universally," received this doctrine. Almost every believer in it has, at some time, had some relation or friend whose condition at death excited fearful thoughts, and clothed the grave with more than midnight darkness. The very strongest temptations have thus been presented to believers in the doctrine to find or create insuperable objections to it; yet the vast majority of Christian believers who have lost friends concerning whose condition they entertain but little hope, remain persuaded that the doctrine is revealed. Mr. Foster had no knowledge or penetration which they did not possess; he also "was formed out of the clay;" he could sub-

stantiate no claim to have his feelings of repugnance regarded as paramount to the feelings of submission and faith with which his Christian brethren, in the hour of their sorrow, have deliberately declared their belief in this doctrine.

But we are furnished with another reply, in a letter of Mr. Foster himself to Rev. Dr. Harris, on another subject and at a different time, in which he describes this world as he thinks it would strike the inhabitants of another planet. These few words will show the tenor of his remarks: "To me it appears a most mysteriously awful economy, overspread by a lurid shade. I pray for the piety to maintain a humble submission to the wise and righteous Disposer of all existence. But to see a nature, created in purity, ruined at the very origin, &c., the grand remedial visitation, Christianity, laboring in a difficult progress—soon perverted—at the present hour known and even nominally acknowledged by very greatly the minority of the race—its progress distanced by the increase of the population—thousands every day passing out of the world in no state of fitness for a pure and happy state elsewhere,—O, it is a



most confounding and appalling contemplation." So he describes this world in very much the same way in which he has depicted future endless retributions; and we may say that had he been told of such a world as ours, under the government of a good God, he would have had misgivings and objections not unlike those which he has expressed on the subject of future punishment. He excites distrust and fear in our minds with regard to the government of the world. We should not feel happy in the thought that God reigns, nor could we see how the multitude of the isles should be glad thereof, should we live under the influence of such views as those of this truly able and excellent man.

It is objected again that "*a mere mortal cannot, by any sins which he can commit, merit endless punishment.*"

Whether he actually does incur it, we say again, must be ascertained from revelation. In reply to this objection, we are to remember that it is not one single transgression which God is called upon to punish — a sudden, unpremeditated, or even one deliberate act, for which act the sinner is sorry; but it is continued disobe-

dience, in opposition to all the methods of divine love and wisdom employed to turn us from our sins. Conscience has faithfully done her work until she was seared; warnings and threatenings have exhausted their strength; the cross of Christ and the influences of the Holy Spirit have proved of no avail.

There may be little sins against some of the gods of heathenism, but there can be no little sin against Jehovah. But how is man "little"? He has competent knowledge of the character of God; he is only "a little lower than the angels,"* and has dominion over all the works of God. He can comprehend the starry heavens; he is godlike in his original nature, for "in the image of God made he him." The sublime truths which God has revealed to man show what estimate God has of man's capacity and responsibility. A finite creature can insult the majesty of heaven as deliberately and intelligently as the archangel; he can annihilate the authority of God in his own soul, and wherever he has influence; if all finite creatures should do this, — and there are no creatures who are not

* Psalm viii.

finite,— there would be no moral universe, no divine government.

It is said, "*It is a libel on the character of God to believe that he can bear to punish his children forever.*"

Had we known beforehand that God was to create offspring whom he would teach to call him by the endearing name of Father, and then should see four hundred of these his children in such a scene of indescribable agony and destruction as was recently witnessed on board the —, we should say the analogy between divine and human parentage surely is imperfect. God is something besides a "Father;" he is King and Judge. Men never discipline their children by drowning them, and burning them, and tearing them in pieces. The destruction of the Canaanites for their iniquity is so terrible, that some, for that reason, reject the Old Testament, which approves it. God's judgments are a great deep. True, "he made birds and flowers;" all the exquisite sensibilities of the human system are his gift; the natural and moral world are, by his love and skill, most

beautifully adapted to each other; and will he hide his face forever from a single child? No, not unless that child persists to hide his face and withhold his heart from God. "For he will not lay on man more than is right, that he should enter into judgment with God." * He is seeking continually to make his children love him. The Sabbath day perpetually reminds every one of them of God. Church spires everywhere point to heaven. Church-going bells call men to prayer, and to hear the gospel. Friends, by their words and example, persuade men to love and serve God. How many people are there, probably, in this city, for example, who have not had, and do not have, not only opportunity, but persuasion of some kind, within and without, to fear God? There are few, if any, who see the lightning or hear the thunder, without having the thought of their accountableness flash through their minds. If but a hearse appears in the streets, all who see it are left without excuse should they die in their sins. "By the things which are made" God is so "clearly seen," that even idolaters are "without excuse;" much

* Job xxxiv. 23.



more they who, to say no more, live where the Christian Sabbath, like the quiet moon, at short and regular intervals, arrests and turns the mighty tide of human affairs, so that even the prisoner in his cell feels it lifting and bearing him heavenward, and the Sabbath-breaker himself, by the very increase of his gains on that day, or by the opportunity for sloth, or by the feeling which leads him to hasten or delay his drive, to avoid the church-going people, has conviction of sin and admonition of duty sufficient to bar excuses and to make him speechless in the day when God rises up to judgment.

But at last the day of life is over — the period within which God told us that his efforts for our conversion would be limited, and after which, he warned us, would be the judgment, and endless retribution. Some said that this was impossible in the nature of things. They were told that the Bible literally declared it. They said that it was figurative, or a parable. They were reminded of the words of Jesus, the final Judge, relating the very words of the last sentence upon the wicked. They said that the God

who made spring, and birds, and flowers, and human affections, and who is himself a Father, could not see men suffer without end. But the love of God, they are told, is not seen in spring, and birds, and flowers, and human happiness, so much as in this, that "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."* But all this proves of no avail; they go to "the judgment-seat of Christ," "every one," to "receive the things done in the body, whether it be good or bad." †

Shall God now violate the fundamental characteristic of their constitution, that is, free agency, and instead of governing them by motives, treat them like moulded clay, which, when it does not suit him, the potter presses together again on the wheel, and makes of it another vessel? That is not such a government as God chooses to administer, but a government of motives, addressed to free and accountable creatures.

* John iv. 10.

† 2 Cor. v. 10.

What shall now be done with those whom God has failed in his efforts to turn and save? Some reply, "He ought to punish them till they do repent."

And yet they who say this, many of them, tell us, as one great argument against future endless punishment, that "we have misery enough in this world, without being punished in the next." Therefore, by their own acknowledgment, God has already used dreadful methods of chastisement with them; so great that they say there cannot be any future punishment of sin. Yet these mortal agonies of body and mind, these life-long trials and sorrows, have failed to make them love and serve God. Will it be useful that he should proceed and punish them further? Can God heap upon them sorrows more bitter than they have felt at the graves of their loved ones, and at their return from those graves to their desolated dwellings? Are there other strokes of his lightnings better fitted to rive and consume their spirits than those with which they have already been struck? It is not reasonable. The wrath of God is not "the power of God and the

wisdom of God unto salvation."* We have a different opinion respecting our Maker from that which leads one to believe that anger, fury, vengeance are the perfection of his governmental influences; as they surely are, if they are more efficacious than the love which he has manifested in the Son of his love.

God himself says, "What more could be done to my vineyard that I have not done in it?"

We suppose, therefore,—and we think it is reasonable,—that if we do not repent of our sins, and are not willing to accept Christ, and all the efforts of mercy to save us, God will suffer us to sin against him forever. He will not hinder us from having our own chosen way. Shall we rebel against this? Will we say, "This is cruel; it is tyrannical, unworthy of God, our heavenly Father, to let us have our own choice? That choice, we know, is not good; but he ought to make us good. What! suffer us to sin against him forever!" We chose to sin against him as long as we could; and now it is not unreasonable to give us the desire of our hearts. But God may say, This I will do. I will

* Rom. i. 16. 1 Cor. i. 18, 24.

place all of you who sin, in a world by yourselves, from which I and my friends will forever withdraw. Perhaps we secretly say, "If this be all, we do not so much object. This is not hell." But suppose that when God withdraws from us, he takes everything away with him. This present world cannot be a pattern of a world where all is sin. For this world was made for an upright race, and when they fell, nature itself, in most things, survived the fall. We are not to suppose that the wicked will find themselves in a world of beauty, where they may reconstruct society after the model of the present life, and where they shall enjoy liberty and all the blessings of God's providence. But if God departs from them, it is reasonable to suppose that he will leave no proofs of his love to them whatever; for he says, "Woe also unto them when I depart from them." * He would take away, we must suppose, all their domestic relations, friendships, social pleasures, books, every pursuit of knowledge, music, travels, quiet sleep, morning and evening salutations of loved ones, and change the whole face of nature; for God

* Hosea ix. 12.

would not have made so many things just to give pleasure, had he made this world for the permanent abode of rebels; and when we leave this world, if we have shut God out of it by our sins, we cannot expect to find a beautiful world like this prepared for our abode. It is of great use to us to see good people here; we feel safer to think that there are churches and meetings for prayer, and the Lord's supper, though we decline any part in them. These things are for our profit; and the good and the bad share alike, because this is a state of probation, not of reward. But if we refuse to be won by these things, then it may be as though a certain vision of Jeremiah were, in some sense, fulfilled in our future abode. He describes Jerusalem wasted, and all her people gone into captivity. "I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of heaven were fled." * When God tells us what heaven is, † he describes the population

* Jer. iv. 23-25.

† Rev. xxii. 14.

of them that are "without — dogs, sorcerers," and others; as though he said, "I will gather sinners together in one place, bring together all the obscene, liars, murderers, pirates, idolaters, into one community with you whose tastes have been cultivated; for why should I discriminate between those who have together rebelled against me, and rejected my Son?" If to any, by reason of their great accomplishments of mind and manners, this will be specially intolerable, they must remember that in those endowments they have special motives and helps towards being saved, and to save others. "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things;" but "thou mayest be no longer steward."

Would there be anything unreasonable in this? In view of all which God has done to save the soul, in view of the full notice which we have received that this life is our only period of probation, and the opportunities which we have had to secure eternal life, we cannot accuse the Almighty of injustice if we find that there is no opportunity after death to repent and believe the gospel. Above all, we cannot reasonably expect, from what we already know of God,

that having expended upon us all which the gospel of his grace includes, he will, upon the failure of that which is "the brightness of his glory," put us into a prison, and wear out our spirits with suffering, and thus reduce us, like refractory culprits, to a state of mind in which we cannot refuse to love him. Such is not the Being whom many of us delight to call, our heavenly Father. If any worship such a God as this, they have their liberty to do so; but let them not complain to us of unreasonableness in our views of God.


It seems reasonable, therefore, to believe, in common with the vast majority in all ages of those who receive the Bible as the word of God, that all who fail to repent and accept the pardon of their sins through Jesus Christ in this life, will at death find those words to be literally true, which seem to be placed among the last words of the Bible by divine arrangement, for the solemn effect which they always have upon the human heart: "He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous let him be righteous still, and he that is holy let him be holy still. And behold I

come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." *

As to the heathen, we are not their judge. The first and second chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, however, are very explicit with regard to them. "The invisible things of God," that is, "his eternal power and Godhead," "are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; so that they are without excuse." † We are told that "they hold the truth," but "in unrighteousness;" therefore it is said, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against" them. ‡ We sometimes hear a passage, in this connection, quoted thus: "For as many as have sinned without law shall also be *judged* without law." Not so. It reads, "For as many as have sinned without law shall also *perish* without law." § It is a common remark, but it will bear repetition, "We shall either find the heathen in heaven, if we ourselves are there, or see good and satisfactory reasons for their not being there."

* Rev. xxii. 11, 12. † Rom. i. 20. ‡ Rom. i. 18. § Rom. ii. 12.

Far too much is made of the question, and great injury has been done by it, whether or not there will be literal fire in the future punishment of the wicked. It is well to discourage such a discussion. We shall have bodies after the resurrection, for "all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Our bodies will, of course, be of a less spiritual nature than the soul, otherwise two souls will be conjoined in one person. We naturally suppose that the object of the body will be to relate the soul to an external world; as glass, in the telescope, though a grosser object than the eye, helps vision, so the body will aid the soul hereafter, as here. This we all admit. Now, in what element, if any, the righteous or the wicked will live hereafter, is of no possible importance to us, seeing that the primary source of happiness or misery with intelligent creatures must be mental, and if there be external sources of pleasure or suffering, they are mere circumstances in their condition; they are not the substantive occasion of their joy or



sorrow. To represent the Most High as inflicting tortures on the bodies of the wicked strikes us as unworthy of the conceptions concerning God with which the Bible inspires us. A world of sinners, unmitigated by the presence of a single good being, God himself and all his restraining influences forever withdrawn, needs no penal fires to increase our sense of its horror; indeed, they rather detract from our ideas of the most intense misery. If all that is personified by "death," and all the mental, moral, and social elements of what is called "hell," are to be "cast into a lake of fire," every intelligent person would suppose that the element containing them would be of little importance. They would be no more to the inhabitants than the element of water could be to Pontius Pilate, whom a great poet represents as in a flood, his hands above it, and he washing them,

"Which still unwashen strove,"

in memory of his taking water to wash those hands of a certain prisoner's blood. No one would suppose that living in the element of water could be a principal source of misery in

such a punishment. But we read, "Then shall the King say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Figurative language, it may justly be said, is out of place in a judicial sentence, for, of all utterances, this should be as strictly literal as justice itself.

If, now, we should believe, on this single passage, or for any other reason, that the element in which future retribution will be administered is declared to be fire, instead of air, or water, or earth, we should do vast injustice to the subject of divine retributions to intrude the idea. I refer to it, therefore, for a purpose, which seems to me important, of vindicating our belief in future endless retributions from imputations of grossness and physical barbarity. We use the language of the Saviour and of his apostles without hesitation, and there we stop. Any details of the curse, and of the punishment, and of what is "prepared," would add nothing to our conceptions of the dread sentence from the lips of Him whose "left hand" was once nailed to the atoning cross, for those whom he bids, "Depart."

If the language of Christ in that last sentence, and in other places, relating to future punishment, be figurative, we remember that, by the laws of the human mind, figurative language is generally resorted to in consequence of insufficiency in literal terms. We do not cavil at the use of figurative speech, nor subtract from its intention, when we know that the speaker is serious and earnest. If a master-in-chancery informs a man that his property has proved "to be zero," the man will not remind his friends, nor insist with his creditors, that the expression is only metaphorical.

We believe that the threatening of future endless punishment has been one great means of what little fear of God there has hitherto been in this world; and that it has been a powerful element in the causes which have led to the salvation of the "multitude which no man can number," who "fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them." We are not ashamed to say that we believe in, and we fear, the everlasting wrath of God, and that this has been a means of leading us to believe in "his Son

from heaven, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." *

Nor is our doctrine one that narrows and enfeebles the mind. It is connected with a stupendous system of truths. It leads us to believe that this world, small as it is, is made use of by the Creator to illustrate principles in his government, "to the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." †

That this world is the smallest but two in the planetary system, is no more a valid objection to its being used for infinite purposes of wisdom, than it would be to object to the size of the slate on which La Place wrought out his logarithms for his *Mécanique Céleste*. God is solving problems in this world with sin; the results may enter into the practical knowledge of unnumbered worlds, as the answers to problems are transferred to books of navigation, and are the confidence of them that are afar off upon the sea. Our own Lexington and Bunker Hill were not too small for transactions which brought this

* 1 Thess. i. 10.

† Eph. iii. 10.

nation into being ; nor did one field in Waterloo prove too small to have the destiny of half of Europe decided there. The cross of a Redeemer has stood here ; things are associated with it which we are told “ angels desire to look into.”* “ All things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”† “ We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor ; that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.” So we believe in a sacrifice for sin, which is made infinitely efficacious by the presence in the person of Jesus of the Word, who was “ with God,” and “ was God.” In such a Redeemer and in such a redemption we see our infinite ruin. We believe that God will show, by means of those who reject this redemption, what sin is capable of doing, and then, by letting sinners eat of the fruit of their own ways, and filling them with their own devices, perhaps he will, by the help of it, so instruct and govern the universe of free, accountable beings, that it shall forever be said, “ Dominion and fear are with him ; he

* 1 Peter i. 12.

† Col. i. 16, 17.

maketh peace in his high places.”* An endless heaven is prepared, in which the righteous will have bodies “fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” Thus being associated most wonderfully with the incarnate Word, they will be the objects of love with all who worship at the throne of God and of the Lamb, and not only so, but with Him who will say of us, with more joy than that with which he regards the ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance, “I have found the sheep that was lost.”

But, in the meantime, we read that “the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;”—such is the crime and the accusation;—“who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all


* Job xxv. 2.

them that believe (for our testimony among you was believed) in that day.”*

The penalty annexed to a law is all that makes it a law; without a penalty, it is no more a law than an extract from a sermon. The penalty is the expression of the lawgiver's opinion of the crime. There is something in weak and insufficient penalties, and in bail far below the offence, which makes the heart faint and sick. It must inspire holy beings with confidence, who know what sin is, and what it deserves, and what it would do to them if it could triumph, to see and feel that there is a Supreme Being, who, with all his love, has no doting fondness, nor any weakness, but can bear to see the wicked suffer, if necessary and right. They consider his word, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die,” and they see in it the foundation of their confidence in God. How much evil is there in sin? It is itself evil; anti-governmental, subverting every form of happiness; its tendency, as we have seen, is to dethrone God. If God affixes less than an infinite punishment to sin, it shows that he considers it less than an


* 2 Thess. i. 7-10.

infinite evil. If the penalty threatened against such a sin be less than infinite, the natural inference would be, To sin against God is not an infinite evil, for it has no infinite punishment. Men could say, and all races on probation could say, If we sin against God, our punishment will come to an end ; and after that, there will be an eternity in heaven, in comparison with which our immense duration of punishment will become as a drop to the sea. Men, they would say, escaped at last, and are now universally and forever happy in heaven ; and so world after world might become rebellious, and their histories be like those of earth. We think it reasonable to say, Far better that the comparatively few from earth should bear the consequences of their sin forever, than that, by an insufficient punishment of sin, disaster should come upon realms we know not how many and great. I say this to meet the objection that the everlasting punishment of any, whether comparatively a few, or even of many, is to be a blot on the government of God. For the whole question may resolve itself into this: Is it best that God should have a moral government? If that involves the



possibility of sin, some would say, No ; others would say, Yes, provided the sinners might be as free in their sin as the righteous are in their righteousness ; then, for the sake of the inconceivable bliss in a universe of intelligent creatures, let there be this government, by motives, and let “ the righteousness of the righteous be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked be upon him.” Angels, it appears, were placed on probation in heaven, and under the most favorable circumstances ; man was placed in probation in paradise, with slight inducement to sin ; man had a Redeemer in the person of his Creator ; angels may have had an equivalent motive to obedience in the immediate presence of their Creator, and in full knowledge of what a forfeiture they would incur by sin. Angels sinned, notwithstanding all that Heaven had done to keep them upright ; men perish, notwithstanding the redemption made by their God and Saviour. The illustrations which their eternal punishment will afford of the nature of sin, of the love of God, of divine justice, of free agency, of holiness and its infinite rewards, we say it is not unreasonable to believe, will out-

weigh the personal sufferings of those who voluntarily sin and perish. We say, voluntarily perish; for God will give to each one according to his deeds. Though there were an inconceivable multitude who should perish, yet in the immense variety of their individual cases, discriminating justice will be weighed out to them with a care and exactness unapproached by the exquisite balances in the mint, or with the apothecary. Could holy beings get the impression that there is one soul from Christian, pagan, or heathen lands, with whom its Maker had dealt harshly, or laid upon him one stripe more than was his due, there would be sudden silence among them; they would look one upon another; and the seraphim who, in their worship, spread more of their six wings to cover themselves with than to fly, would spread them all to fly,—whither they might not say, but only where they might no longer be constrained to cry, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts! No such occasion ever will be given for such loss of confidence; but they will say, “Alleluia! salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto



the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments." *

As those who desire to be of good repute with you as men of understanding, and of humane, generous sentiments and feelings, we do not hesitate to say, that the "reasonableness of future endless punishment" is as plain to us as its scriptural proofs.

If, when we read that it would have been good for Judas Iscariot that he had never been born, and therefore that there is no eternity of happiness for him, to follow any vast period of expiatory suffering,—if we are expressly told that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, neither in this world nor in that which is to come,—if it be true that Satan and his angels are reserved in chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day, and if then a part of our race are to be consigned to the same abode with them for retribution,—whose eternity is expressed by the selfsame word which is employed to designate the duration of happiness for the righteous; and

* Rev. xix. 1.

for these and other equally powerful representations of the Bible, we have unwavering faith in the doctrine as a revealed truth; the confidence with which we believe it may be judged of when we say, that it commends itself to our reason as truly as it does to our faith. How it commends itself to our faith, may be learned by knowing that the doctrine does not stand as an isolated thing in our belief. The laws of comparative anatomy, so to speak, may be applied to it, and we say, If certain things are true, which in our earliest discoveries of practical truth we are confident are essential to salvation, then this doctrine is as really required, as immense vertebrae of an unknown animal require that the undiscovered ribs should also be immense. An astronomer notices the slower or quicker rate of motion in a planet at one part of its orbit, and he tells you that there must be a world beyond it, not yet seen; he tells you its size, its gravity, its orbit, its rate of motion; and when at last Neptune is discovered, it proves to be precisely that which Uranus dictated by his perturbations. So that the doctrine of endless retribution is not, with us, a mere dogma; it belongs to a great

scheme of revealed truth which we call the "plan of redemption," all of which stands or falls together.

The key to this great scheme — "which," we are warranted to say, "in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets" — is the Supreme Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Believe that, and logically you are led to receive the whole. Reject that, and you cannot consistently believe the doctrine now under discussion.

"What think ye of Christ?" is the test
To try both your state and your scheme."

The Creator, the Second Person in the Godhead, takes our nature; that mysterious, complex Being goes to the cross, and dies. Then the atonement follows, as a matter of course; and if an atonement is made for sin, then the wages of sin is death. If man can atone for sin by ages of suffering, and then reach heaven, it is unreasonable, we say, to believe that this stupendous sacrifice would have been made. So

that Christ is "the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation." There are words of mighty import in that passage: "Who hath made him *to be sin* for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." *

"THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH." Some say, The wages of sin is conscience; some, The wages of sin is discipline; some, The wages of sin is imprisonment for a great indefinite period, for the purpose of punishment and restoration. Let us adhere to the Bible: "The wages of sin is death." If you call it figurative, the laws of rhetoric teach us that a meaning totally opposite to the nature of a figure cannot be true. The ruling idea conveyed by the word *death* is *termination*. If you search the Bible for instances in which *death* means a limited infliction, and so reduce one side of the equation in the passage from which the text is taken, you must by necessity reduce the other side; and thus, so much as you diminish *death*, you must diminish *life*; for if death be not death, neither is life eternal life.

* 2 Cor. v. 21.

Notice also the two contrasted words in the verse from which the text is taken : “ The *wages* of sin is death ; but the *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Death for sin is “ wages ” — something earned or merited. Eternal life is not “ wages ” to us ; it is to angels. The law is the angels’ gospel. They stand by obedience. But to us eternal life, if we have it, is without works — a gift, unmerited, free. Having forfeited heaven by sin, God stands ready to give it to us on certain terms, the terms and method themselves being no less wonderful than the gift.

Need I remind you that this is a subject which, for each of us, is of unparalleled interest ? Each of us may, without presumption, say with his Maker, “ I live forever.” If God says, “ Of my years there is no end,” the words may be responded to by us : Of my years there is no end. But each of us is also a sinner, ruined and lost. We believe that sin can be forgiven only by faith in Jesus Christ, who, by his sufferings and death, is a substitute for the sinner, and constitutes for him a righteousness

which takes away his condemnation, and prepares for his sanctification and salvation. We are told that there is salvation in no other way, and, moreover, that unbelief of it, where there has been sufficient opportunity to understand it, proceeds from a wrong state of feeling, and is therefore morally wrong, and that such unbelief is declared by Christ and his apostles to be the greatest of all pardonable sins. Christ says, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Do we who preach tell the people this? Surely it is not possible for the Son of God to suffer and die in our stead, and we be innocent if we do not believe in him; but we shall add to the guilt of sin the heavier guilt of rejecting the offered remedy, procured at such infinite expense. The sight of Christ will close our lips if we are not saved. He portrayed the scenes of the last judgment; the separation, the welcome of the righteous, and the sinner's doom. And having done this, he went to "a place which is called Calvary," and died to save us from the condemnation which he had so faithfully and affect-

ingly portrayed. If we fail to believe in him, and he therefore fails to redeem us from our sin, we must experience the truth of our text. And when the judgment is passed by, and the wicked have gone to their own place, and angels stand in silence, weeping, and thinking of their end, methinks I hear one of them break the silence and say, After the Saviour had suffered for them, it is an infinite pity that they should perish. And may many (may it be all!) of you, who now are unbelievers, but then redeemed sinners, continue the strain and say, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Salvation! Salvation! Every one of us can be saved. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with him." O Saviour! how sweet thy name! how precious thy dying love, in connection with this theme! Thou art our sun, pouring celestial beauty on those clouds which are round about God, and

painting on this darkness and tempest at which we have gazed, a rainbow in sight like unto an emerald. May we all cast our crowns at thy feet, saying: "UNTO HIM THAT LOVED US, AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD, AND HATH MADE US KINGS AND PRIESTS UNTO GOD AND HIS FATHER; TO HIM BE GLORY AND DOMINION FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN."

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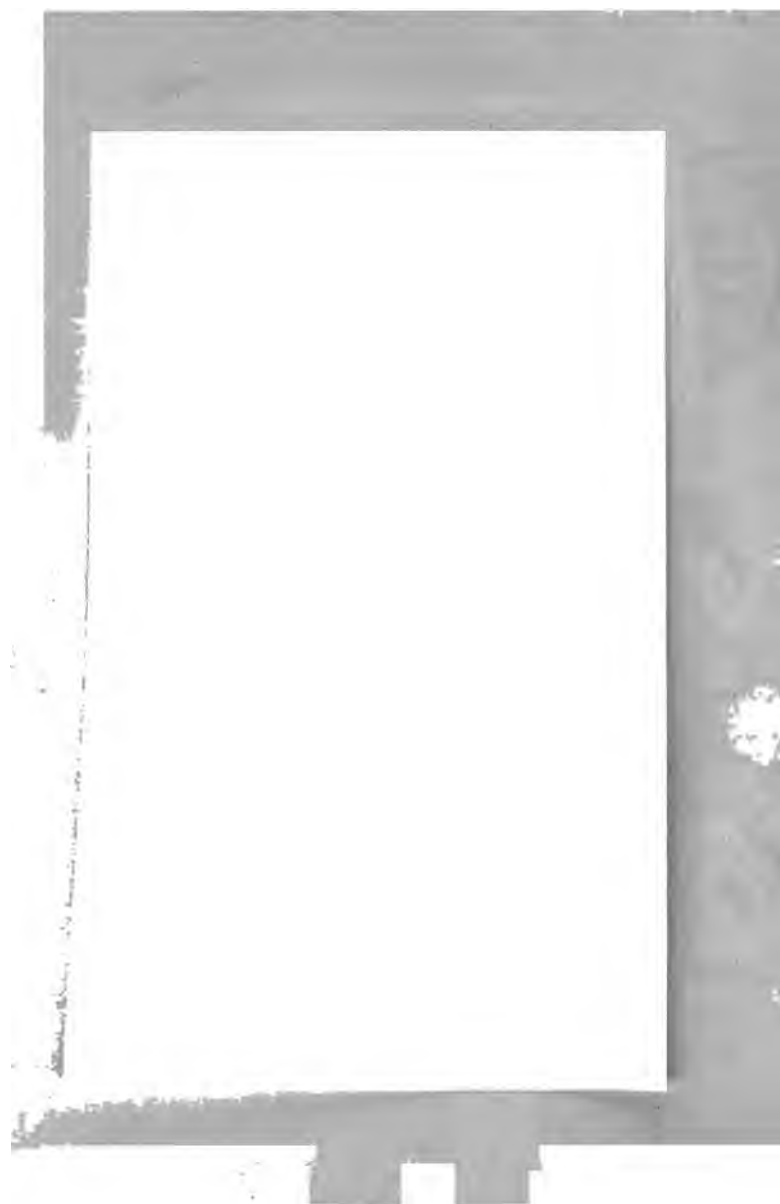
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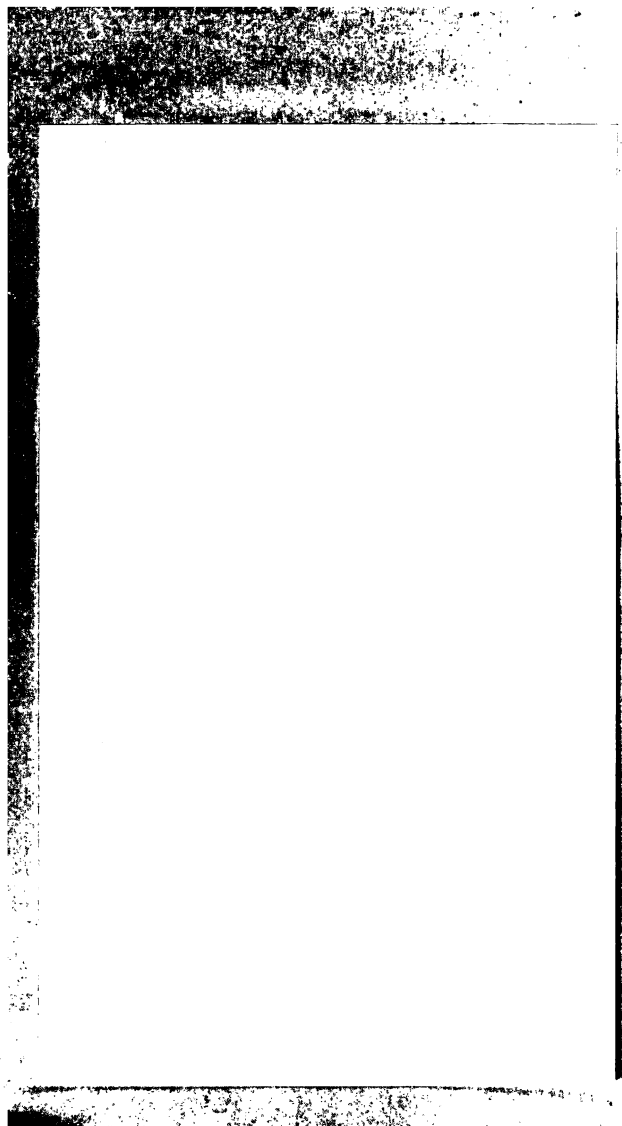






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